

KING AGIS OF SPARTA

**OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS**

**AMEN HOUSE, E.C. 4
London Edinburgh Glasgow
Leipzig New York Toronto
Melbourne Capetown Bombay
Calcutta Madras Shanghai**

**HUMPHREY MILFORD
PUBLISHER TO THE
UNIVERSITY**

KING AGIS OF SPARTA
AND HIS
CAMPAIGN IN ARKADIA
IN 418 B.C.

*A CHAPTER IN
THE HISTORY OF THE ART OF WAR
AMONG THE GREEKS*

W. J. Woodhouse
BY
W. J. WOODHOUSE
*Professor of Greek in the
University of Sydney*

Ἀμίλει μὰ τὸν Δι' οὐκ ἐνασπιδώσομαι,
λέξω δ' ὑπὲρ Λακεδαιμονίων & μοι δοκεῖ.
ARISTOPH. *Acharn.* 368

OXFORD
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
1933



Hist. - One -
Wahr
3-12-34
28614

To
the Memory of those sometime Students
in my Greek Classes
in the University of Sydney
who in the Great War
volunteered for Service
and gave their lives
for King and Country

JAMES BLACKWOOD
LEONARD ROCKLEY BROWNLOW
CECIL HOPE COHEN
SYDNEY JAMES GEORGE DAVIS
HERBERT DEBENHAM
WILLIAM GEORGE VINCENT HILLCOAT
ROGER FORREST HUGHES
HUBERT KINGSLEY MEEK
MORVEN KELYNACK NOLAN
RODERIC ALAN EDWARD O'CONNOR
CHARLES WILLOUGHBY LEE PULLING
EDWARD CLEMENT RENNIE
KENETH MAURICE HALGREN SOLOMON
JAMES ROBERT STEWART
LAURENCE WHISTLER STREET
KEITH JOHN WADE

'Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.'

03-13-34 JF

THE binding ornament on the front of the book represents a bronze statuette (5½ inches high) of a Greek Hoplite wearing crested Corinthian helmet, cuirass, and greaves, and carrying a shield of the type called Boiotian. It was found at Dodona, and is now in Berlin. Its date is early in the Fifth Century B.C.

PREFACE

MY acquaintance with the parts of Arkadia here under discussion, first made over forty years ago, has been renewed from time to time in the interval—though indeed all too infrequently to match my love of them. The main lines of my interpretation of the events described by Thucydides were first laid down by me in view of the scene of action itself as far back as 1908. Since that date the work has been re-handled and re-written very many times—so many that I have lost all count.

No portion of the book has cost so much in labour as the revision of the Greek Text, with the English Translation, of these Fifteen Chapters of Thucydides, upon which the rest of what I have here written is simply an elaborate Commentary. The revised Text was prepared by way of coming perforce to a decision as to what Thucydides wrote; the Translation expresses as accurately and clearly as possible what I take his words to mean.

In the upshot, it has been found necessary to jettison the preliminary Greek Text, together with the Notes meant to justify the readings and interpretations adopted. In these I hoped to have put forward something of value for Thucydidean scholarship, from the point of view of method, as well as of results; both Text and Notes must now be reserved for some later opportunity, and I must be content here to exhibit the Translation alone.

In respect of mere statement, fortunately, Thucydides in these Chapters has been, in the main, perhaps as clear as ever was possible for a writer constitutionally so obscure. Whether his conceptions were on all fours with objective facts and their underlying significance, whether indeed his narrative is not in parts self-contradictory and devoid of logic and genuine intelligibility—that is one of the questions my book sets out to answer.

Some there will be, no doubt, perhaps many, who by impugning the cogency of the argument or the legitimacy of the method will endeavour to discredit the conclusions here

reached. There will always be those who prefer to stick to their old mumpsimus. With them science has nothing to do. But I would not be misunderstood—as though it were after all my secret design to launch treacherous shaft at the object of their blind devotion.

It is from the point of view of a student of ancient military art alone that the statements, and the omissions, of Thucydides are here examined. Only to such as would claim for him infallibility in every field, and from whatever angle his work is regarded, can the results of that examination prove embarrassing. On the other hand, only within the restricted field above indicated are those results properly valid. One of the first would I be to acknowledge that they are far from touching the real heart of Thucydides, and to affirm that they sink into insignificance when weighed in the scales against those other excellences upon which the world's verdict of his unapproachable supremacy securely rests.

Nevertheless, even Thucydides cannot plead privilege, and escape the test of his own challenge. Since he has asserted for himself this claim of adequacy and accuracy we should be false to his own spirit were we to shrink from applying to his work that same impersonal mercilessness which is his own special characteristic, even as it is a prime condition of all scientific analysis. And if we may not shun the process, so neither may we evade its results. We are, I think, in no slight danger these days, and not least in connexion with Thucydides, of being content to accept sentimental twaddle for reasoned appreciation, and of approving the conventional platitudes of indiscriminate eulogy as good substitute for sanely critical judgement. No greater disservice, I am convinced, could be done to these the Hellenic progenitors and vehicles of our culture, than the endeavour to put a fence about them and to screen them from the operation of that critical spirit which was of the essence of their own life, and among the most precious of their gifts to posterity.

W. J. W.

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY
NEW SOUTH WALES

25 April, 1933

CONTENTS

	PAGE
TRANSLATION	2
Chapter I. INTRODUCTORY	13
Chapter II. THE HISTORICAL PROBLEM	17
Chapter III. THE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS	23
Chapter IV. FIRST POSITION OF THE ARMIES	35
Chapter V. THE STRATAGEM OF KING AGIS	42
Chapter VI. THE FIELD OF BATTLE	57
Chapter VII. DEPLOYMENT OF THE ARMY OF KING AGIS	66
Chapter VIII. THE BATTLE OF MANTINEIA	77
Chapter IX. THE ROLE OF THE TWO POLEMARCHS	86
Chapter X. THE BATTALIONS OF THE TWO POLEMARCHS	94
Chapter XI. THE STRATEGIC PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION	106
Excursus A. THE FOREST CALLED PELAGOS	126
Excursus B. THE NUMBERS ENGAGED	131
Excursus C. THE TIME COVERED BY THE OPERATIONS	147

MAPS AND DIAGRAMS

	PAGE
I. Sketch Map of the Theatre of Operations	22
II. Sketch Map of the Plain of Mantinea, showing the Battle Sites	58
III. Diagram to Show the Relation of the Outer Position (A) and of the Inner Position (B) to the Communications with Mantinea	116
IV. Diagram showing the Geographical Relationship of the Places in the Peloponnese, to which reference is made in this book	152

The following ABBREVIATIONS are used in the Notes:

Claus. = *On War*, by Gen. Carl von Clausewitz; translated by Colonel J. J. Graham. Three vols., London, 1918.

Bernh. = *On War of To-day*, by Friedrich von Bernhardi; translated by Karl von Donat. Two vols., London, 1912.

TRANSLATION
OF
THUCYDIDES V. 61-75.

Whoso shal telle a tale after a man,
He moote reherce, as ny as ever he can,
Everich a word, if it be in his charge.
CHAUCER, *Prologue* 731.

TRANSLATION

61 The next event was the arrival of reinforcements from Athens—one thousand infantry of the line, and three hundred horse, under the command of Laches and Nikostratos. The Argeians, however, could not bring themselves to throw their armistice in the face of the Lakedaimonians, but urged the Athenians to be gone, and refused to introduce them to their Assembly when they wanted to discuss the situation; until in the end the Mantineians and Eleians, who had not yet left Argos, forced them to it by sheer importunity. So the Athenians, through their official mouthpiece Alkibiades, there with them, took the same point before the Argeians as before the Confederates; their argument being that they had no right to make the truce at all, behind the back of the other members of the coalition. “We are here”, they said, “just at the right moment; and your business now is to get on with the war.” This way of putting it carried the day with the Confederates, who forthwith marched against Orchomenos [in Arkadia]—all except the Argeians; these, though just as much convinced as the rest, nevertheless hung back at the first: but afterwards, later on, they joined the others. Sitting down before Orchomenos they [all] invested the place, and made repeated attempts to carry it. A special reason for their keenness to get hold of it was that within its walls were hostages from Arkadia, deposited there by the Lakedaimonians. As there was no apparent prospect of relief, the Orchomenians, in dismay at the weakness of their defences and the strength of the assailants, forestalled destruction by capitulation; the terms being that they must join the coalition, and give hostages of their own, besides giving up to the Mantineians those hostages also whom the Lakedaimonians had deposited with them.

62 The next step of the Confederates, once they had Orchomenos, was to decide at which of the remaining places they should first strike. The Eleians were all for Lepreon, the Mantineians for Tegea; the Argeians and Athenians sided with the Mantineians. So the Eleians, extremely mad

because the decision had not been for Lepreon, made for home; but the rest of the Confederates set about preparing at Mantinea for their offensive against Tegea. In fact, certain also of the Tegeans themselves, inside the town, were organizing a movement in their interest.

63 Now the Lakedaimonians, after they had retired from Argeian territory, having made the four months' armistice, were loud in denunciation of Agis for his not having brought Argos under their hand, upon so splendid an opportunity, such as for their own part they were convinced had never before offered; for it was not so easy, they argued, to bring together a body of allies to match those either in numbers or in quality. When, on top of this, reports kept coming in about Orchomenos—that the town had fallen—they were still more furious, and in the heat of the moment, though that ran counter to their own usage, they were for coming to a resolution that they should level his house with the ground, and fine him one hundred thousand drachmai. Agis pleaded with them to do nothing of this—by good service in the field he would clear himself of their insinuation; else then let them have their will of him. So they held in abeyance the fine and the razing of his house, contenting themselves for the time being with the adoption of a measure hitherto strange to them; that was, to associate with the king an advisory council of ten of the Spartiates, without whom he had no power to lead out an army from Sparta.

64 While they were upon this, there comes for them news from Tegea, from their friends in that town, that unless they mean to let themselves be seen there, and that speedily, Tegea will fall away from them to the Argeians and the Confederates, and has indeed as good as done so. It needed only that to make the Lakedaimonians turn out for active service, themselves and the Helots, in full strength, in hot haste—never had there been anything like it before; their point of concentration Orestheion in the Mainalian territory. To those of the Arkadians that were allies of their own they gave notice to muster and follow hard after them to Tegea. For their own part, having come as far as Orestheion in full force, they from there sent back to Sparta the sixth part of

their levy, comprising the oldest and the youngest classes, for home defence; with the balance of their forces they went on to Tegea, where not long afterwards their Arkadian allies mustered. They send also to Corinth, and to Boiotians and Phokians and Lokrians, summoning their levies to converge with all speed upon Mantinea. The call took these by surprise; nor was it easy for them, unless they marched in a body, which meant waiting for one another, to get through the enemy territory, which lying between them and their goal blocked their passage. Nevertheless, they made what speed they could. The Lakedaimonians, however, with the muster of Arkadian allies, crossed the frontier into the territory of Mantinea, and having established their camp at the Herakleion set about harrying the countryside.

65 The Argeians and the Confederates, upon sight of them, occupied a position steep and hard to come at, and drew out their order prepared to fight; and the Lakedaimonians straightway made against them. Their advance had brought them within stone and javelin range, when the next thing was, that one of the older men seeing how strong a position they were assaulting bawled out to Agis: "So that is your notion—with ill cure ill"; a hint that the king's present mistimed forwardness would fain be a retrieval of the discredit of his withdrawal from Argos. Whether it was actually because of what had been shouted out to him, or really that there had flashed into his own mind some different scheme, Agis suddenly drew off his army again at speed before it got to close quarters. Next, having reached the territory of Tegea, he set about diverting the water into the territory of Mantinea. It is on account of this water in fact, since it is so very apt to make havoc, whichever territory it invades, that there is bad blood between Mantineians and Tegeans. What Agis was after, was the making those fellows on the hill, the Argeians and the Confederates, come down from their perch, marching out to where he was tampering with the stream, as soon as they should get wind of it, that so he might fight his battle on the level ground. So, for that day halted there about the stream, he was working at its diversion.

The Argeians and the Confederates at the first were dumbfounded at the Lakedaimonians' sudden retirement, and did not know what to make of it. Next, when the enemy steadily drawing off had dropped them clean out of sight, while they themselves were standing idle instead of following on their heels, they at this fell a-grumbling again at their own commanders: "The time before, when so beautifully trapped under the walls of Argos, the Lakedaimonians had been let slip; and to-day again, they are on the run, and not a man after them. There they go, getting quietly away with whole skins, while we are as quietly betrayed." The Confederate generals were driven to a nonplus for that time; but later on they drew down their men from the height, and having advanced into the level ground pitched there in readiness to encounter the enemy.

66 Next day the Argeians, with the Confederates, got themselves properly into line as they meant to fight, if fight there was to be. The Lakedaimonians, on their side, being on the march from the stream back to the Herakleion, making for their old camp, discover the enemy close at hand, all by this time in order of battle and thrown forward away from the high ground. Never within their memory had the Lakedaimonians been so taken aback as at this crisis—they must, of course, make their dispositions for action with hardly a moment to spare. Instantly, therefore, they set about deploying in quick time into their own formation; king Agis directing each movement, according to usage. For when a Spartan king is in the field, it is in him that all control centres. He personally gives his Polemarchs their instructions, and they instruct their battalion commanders, and they the captains of companies, and these in their turn the platoon leaders, and these their platoon. Any further orders also that they want to send down the line follow just the same route, and reach their destination without loss of time. For pretty nearly all the Lakedaimonian army, with but small exception, is a chain of command; so that responsibility for execution of operations rests upon many shoulders.

67 On this occasion, then, to form their left wing, Skirites proceeded to take post—for always do they, alone of Lake-

daimonians, hold this place in the battle line as a separate corps—and alongside them the soldiers that had seen service in Thrace under Brasidas; and Neodamodes brigaded with them. Next, from this point on, Lakedaimonians proper brought their battalions into line, battalion after battalion, and up to right of them, Arkadians—Heraians first, and then Mainalians; on the right wing Tegeans, with a handful of Lakedaimonians at the very end of the line: on either wing their mounted troops. Such was the Lakedaimonian order of battle. On their opponents' side, Mantineians held the right wing, because it was on their soil that the battle was being fought; and alongside them were their Arkadian allies. Next, there were Argeians—first the Thousand picked men for whom from a good while back the state had been providing military training at public expense, and in immediate sequence to them the bulk of the Argeians; and after them their allies from Kleonai and Orneai. Next, the Athenians, at the end of the line, holding the left wing, supported by their own mounted troops.

68 That was the order of battle and composition of both armies. The army of the Lakedaimonians obviously had the advantage in numbers; but as for setting down a definite figure, either for the several contingents on either side, or for the grand totals—that is more than I could have done, with accuracy. There was no getting at the strength of the Lakedaimonians, thanks to the secrecy of their administration; as for the figures for the others again, there was no trusting them, because men are so prone to exaggeration touching their own numbers. From the following computation, however, any one can see the number of Lakedaimonians that day in the field. Not counting Skirites, six hundred strong, there were in action seven battalions. In each battalion were four companies, and in the company four platoons; of the platoon again, there fought in its front rank four men. In depth of file there was no uniformity, but each battalion commander did as he pleased; over all they stood eight deep. From end to end, excluding Skirites, the front rank numbered four hundred and forty eight men.

69 And now the armies would presently advance to

engage; the moment had come for commanders of contingents to address the usual heartening words to their respective commands. This was the style of appeal:—Mantineians were reminded that the battle would decide their country's fate, whether for dominion or for subjection; they must not be robbed of the one, having once had taste of it, nor be brought again to taste of the other. Argeians were reminded that for them it was a fight for their old-time leadership, and for that equality of dignity within Peloponnesian which they had once enjoyed; they must not submit for ever to be despoiled, but upon men that were at once neighbours and foes avenge long tale of wrongs. The Athenians were told that it was a fine thing, fighting shoulder to shoulder with so many gallant allies, to be as good as the best; victory over Lakedaimonians on a Peloponnesian field would mean consolidation and enlargement of their empire, and that never again would they see foe on Attic soil. Such was the gist of the addresses to the Argeians and Confederates. The Lakedaimonians, on the other hand, as well in the several contingents as with their war-songs in their native battalions, bade valiant hearts recall those lessons which they had made their own—in the knowledge that long practice in the school of action has more saving virtue than last-moment stimulus of fine phrases.

70 So then, after this came the charge: Argeians and the Confederates advancing at a high pitch of fury, the Lakedaimonians deliberately to the strains of many pipers stationed in the ranks—not with any religious significance, but to ensure that the men should advance on an even front [marching in step], and not find their line falling to pieces—precisely what masses of infantry are apt to do in their onsets.

71 The charging lines were not yet in collision, when king Agis conceived the resolution of carrying out the following manœuvre. This is what armies, all of them, do:—they thrust outwards more and more towards their own right wing in their charges, so that both armies overlap with their right, over against the enemy's left; the men feel nervous, and so each man squeezes his exposed side as close as ever

he can to the shield of the file on his right, under the idea that the closeness of locking-up gives best cover. The file-leader of the right wing is primarily to blame for this deflection, he being bent on edging away continually with his own exposed side from the enemy in his front; and by reason of the like nervousness the rest follow his lead. And so, on this occasion, the Mantineians had reached with their wing well past the Skirites; while still farther, in proportion as theirs was the larger army, had the Lakedaimonians and Tegeans reached past the Athenians. Realizing to his dismay that the Mantineians reached past him overmuch, and that his own left would perhaps be enveloped, Agis directed the Skirites and Veterans of Brasidas to move out away from him, and draw level with the Mantineians. To fill the gap thus created, order after order he sent down, for two of his Polemarchs, Hipponoidas and Aristokles, from the right [wing] with two battalions to make a lateral movement and throw their battalions in, and fill it. He felt sure that his own right would still retain its numerical superiority, while the section of his line that faced the Mantineians would have its stability ensured.

72 Now the first result was, he found, that as his orders had taken them on a sudden, just when the onset was in progress, Aristokles and Hipponoidas would not carry out the lateral movement—for the which insubordination, in fact, they were afterwards banished from Sparta, being held to have played coward; the next was, that the enemy were on him before the desired touch could be established. Since the two battalions had failed to carry out the lateral movement towards the Skirites, Agis had urged the latter to recover touch with his centre, but found that neither could they now close upon him. No, the Lakedaimonians were signally and at all points beaten in respect of technical skill; but just as signal the exhibition this day, of that fighting quality which more than anything else saved the situation. Naturally, when they were now at close quarters with their opponents, their Skirites and Veterans of Brasidas could not stand to it with the Mantineians of the right wing. Dashing in by the gap in the line where it had not been closed, the

Mantineians and their allies, together with the Thousand picked men of the Argeians, fell to cutting up the Lakedaemonians; they enveloped and broke them, boring them right back, in upon their train, and of the older men there posted they made some slaughter. In this quarter, then, the day was going against the Lakedaemonians. With the rest of their army, however, and in particular with the centre—where in fact the king Agis was, and about him his three hundred Knights, as they are styled—they fell upon the older Argeians, or so-called Five Battalions, and upon Kleonaians and Orneatai and the Athenian files adjacent to these, and routed them. The bulk of these men never so much as stood to strike stroke, but gave ground the instant the Lakedaemonians drove home their charge; more than one being actually trampled underfoot in the stampede to get clear of the charge in time.

73 Once the army of the Argeians and Confederates had given ground in this quarter, they were more and more going to pieces—and that in both directions at once; and at the same time the Lakedaemonians and Tegeans of the right, with the overlap of their line, were working round the Athenians. On either hand destruction stared the latter in the face—on their left they were being enveloped, on their right they were already beaten men; it must have gone harder with them than with any other division of the Confederate army, had not their cavalry been there to relieve the pressure. It so fell out also, that when Agis realized the distress of his own left—the troops that had faced the Mantineians and the Thousand Argeians—he sent along the line an order for his entire array to move to the support of the wing that was being crushed. Whereupon in the interval, as soon as ever the army sheered off towards that flank and swung away clear of them, the Athenians got quietly away with whole skins, and along with them that section of the Argeians which had been put out of action. As for the Mantineians and their allies and the select Argeian corps, they began to lose zest for further execution upon the men in front of them; nay, seeing their own side beaten men, and the Lakedaemonians bearing down, they turned and ran

for it. Of the Mantineians a good number were cut down; of the picked Argeians, most escaped with their lives. The rout and retirement, however, were not pressed hotly, or over any great distance; for the Lakedaimonians, by sticking fast until they make the enemy turn tail, keep up a long and stubborn fight: once they have made him turn tail, they push their pursuit neither long nor far.

74 That then was how the fight went—that is to say, as nearly as one could describe it—the very greatest for many and many a year, of the fights between Greeks, and one contested by their most considerable states.

The Lakedaimonians took position covering the enemy's dead, and forthwith set about erecting a memorial of victory and stripping the slain. Their own dead they picked up and carried to Tegea, and there they were buried; the enemy's dead were surrendered under the usual armistice. There had fallen, of Argeians, Orneatai and Kleonaians, seven hundred; of Mantineians, two hundred; of Athenians, including their settlers in Aegina, two hundred, as well as both Generals. On the Lakedaimonian side, their allies had not been so roughly handled as to suffer any loss really worth mention; concerning themselves, it was hard to get at the facts, but about three hundred were said to have fallen.

75 Now when the battle was imminent, Pleistoanax also, the other king, with the oldest and the youngest service classes, had marched to the support of Agis; he got as far as Tegea, but fell back again upon news of the victory. The Lakedaimonians also sent and turned back the allies at Corinth and beyond the Isthmus; and retired for their own part also, and dismissed the allied contingents, and then entered upon their Karneian festival, which was now fully due. Thus the criticism at that time aimed at them by the Greeks on the score of degeneracy, by reason of their mishap on the island, and on the score of their general policy of muddle and procrastination—here, by a single action, they turned the edge of that; it was felt that they were being decried for a buffet of Fortune, while in mettle they were still the same.

The day before this battle, it also fell out that the Epidau-

rians in full strength raided the territory of Argos, expecting to find it bare of troops, and cut to pieces numbers of the Argeian guards left to defend it when the main body went off to the war. So three thousand Eleian infantry of the line having reinforced the Mantineians, too late for the battle, as well as a second Athenian contingent one thousand strong, this whole Confederate force presently marched against Epidauros, while the Lakedaimonians were celebrating the Karneian festival; and having apportioned the work they set about shutting in the town with a wall. The others, indeed, threw up their task, but the Athenians presently completed the section with which they had been charged, namely the promontory on which stood the temple of Hera. So leaving in this fortification a garrison drafted from all the Confederates, they retired, each contingent to its own state. And so the season for active operations drew to a close.

NOTE

The following are the principal readings in which the revised text underlying my Translation differs from that of Hude's ed. maior.

Chap. 61: πρὶν οἱ Μαντινῆς καὶ Ἡλεῖοι
ἐν τε τοῖς Ἀργείοις καὶ <τοῖς> ξυμμάχοις ταῦτά,
ἐπὶ Ὀρχομενὸν [τὸν Ἀρκαδικὸν] πάντες,
ὑπελείποντο <τὸ> πρῶτον,
τὸν Ὀρχομενὸν [πάντες]
σφῶν τε αὐτῶν δοῦναι καὶ Μαντινεῦσι καὶ οὓς κατέθεντο

62: καὶ αὐτῶν Τεγεατῶν ἐν τῇ πόλει

63: ῥύσεσθαι τῆς αἰτίας στρατευσάμενος,

64: οἱ ξύμμαχοι <οἱ> ἀπ' Ἀρκάδων

65: εἴτε καὶ αὐτῷ ἄλλο τι ἢ κατὰ τὸ αὐτὸ δόξαν, ἐξαίφνης πάλιν
καταβιβάσαι—τοὺς Ἀργείους καὶ τοὺς ξυμμάχους—καὶ
μείνας αὐτοῦ [περὶ] τὸ ὕδωρ ἐξέτρεπεν·
τῇ ἐξ ὀλίγου [αἰφνιδίῳ] αὐτῶν ἀναχωρήσει

66: ὥς ἔμελλον μαχεῖσθαι, ἦνπερ τύχῳσι·
μάλιστα δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι
σχεδὸν γάρ τι πᾶν, πλὴν ὀλίγου,

69: ἐνταῦθα καὶ <αἱ> παραινέσεις

70: ὑπὸ αὐλητῶν πολλῶν ὁμοῦ ἐγκαθεστῶτων, οὐ τοῦ θεοῦ χάριν,
ἀλλ' ἵνα ὁμαλῶς [μετὰ ῥυθμοῦ βαίνοντες] προέλθοιεν

71: παρήγγελλε ἀπὸ τοῦ δεξιοῦ [κέρως]

72: τοὺς πολεμίους φθάσαι τὴν πρόσμειξιν,

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

οὗτοι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς πάντα θεοὶ θνητοῖσ' ὑπέδειξαν,
ἀλλὰ χρόνῳ ζητοῦντες ἐφευρίσκουσιν ἄμεινον.

XENOPHANES.

THE obscurities in the account given by Thucydides of the campaign and battle of Mantinea in 418 B.C., not to stress the staring incoherencies and mutual contradictions of modern accounts based upon that narrative, make it desirable that this portion of his History should be subjected to thoroughgoing analysis and criticism. Such analysis and criticism is what is attempted in the following pages.

Clearly, something more than analytic criticism is demanded, if this piece of military history is to be established on a firm basis as material of scientific knowledge. The endeavour has accordingly here been made to correlate the military operations as closely as possible with those physical data by which they were actually conditioned. And while steadfastly maintaining my own point of view, I have striven throughout to interpret the details in the light of that whole evolutionary process which constitutes the History of the Art of War among the Greeks. Continuous effort has been made to realize imaginatively the conditions of this particular mode of human activity, as displayed in Greece in the fifth century before our era; reconstruction working always from within outwards—that is to say, from and through the ascertained facts, or the reasonable probabilities, of ancient life itself; not from and through the conceptions and technical experiences of later times, or by reference to some fictitious propriety of method to which the ancients should have conformed.

There is unquestionably here a real danger, of losing sight of the fact that the investigation is of military art in its infancy, when everything exhibited itself with naïve simplicity and directness. No less true is it, on the other hand, that the subject-matter of our analysis is the shrewdly practical and objective outcome of the intuitive perceptions of individual leaders, not all of them known to us even by name,

who were, each in his generation, of more than ordinary endowment for the successful handling of concrete military problems, under the special conditions of that age. Consequently, we are bound to assess at full value the personal factor, to recognize the immense significance of this or that particular commander as a creative and directive force, whether as actual leader of men in the shock of combat, or as innovator and experimenter in military technique. Nevertheless, we are surely astray unless all the time we keep our eye resolutely fixed upon the object—upon the Greek fighting-man himself as he functions under the special conditions of his own world, with the special equipment, offensive and defensive, that centuries of experience had evolved for him and through him. He survived, not, as sometimes the temptation is to think, despite these things, and only in so far as blindly and unconsciously he approximated to certain *a priori* rules that men in later times have been so clever as to discover and to formulate, but just by means of these his adaptations to the actual necessities of his own environment.

Unfortunately, the investigation is hampered at every turn, by the terrible poverty of our documents. How few the ancient battles, not to speak of campaigns, of which we have anything like a detailed account. Partly, no doubt, this poverty is explicable by reference to the real simplicity and sameness of the action, at least in the earlier episodes of warfare. Any one campaign or battle must have been much like another. A few hundreds of men, at most a few thousands, on either side—"pointing days for pitched fields, and so trying it out upon an even match"—marched out no great way to some convenient spot; arrived there, the two sides, after certain well-understood and inevitable preliminaries, fell to the grim game, until, sooner or later, one or other side just ran away—the whole business being, as it were, reduced to a sort of national routine or procedure, almost we might call it a ritual. It was a long time before men "grew to advantages of place, cunning diversions", and the like, and so "grew more skilful in the ordering of their battles"; a long time again was it before the "insatiate greediness" of human curiosity began to lay hold of the

individual and special details of these alarms and excursions, which recurred almost with the regularity of the seasons. And when at last this stage had been reached, with what sorry vagueness and generality, if at all, is the local setting of events presented, in at any rate by far the greater number of such accounts as have survived from the wreck of ancient literature. How scanty, how dubious in quality, is our information concerning numbers, composition of armies, their organization, equipment, tactics and mode of fighting. Add to all this the fact that such tradition of method, or Art of War, as may have existed, beyond all doubt did exist, in those early times, has perished almost without a trace, except so far as its operation may be dimly apprehended in those episodes of warfare that constitute the sparse material of our induction. Nor have we any guarantee, except such as incurable optimism may pretend to furnish, that the extant literary tradition conserves just the moments that were really most significant in the development of the military art during those turbulent centuries.

Hardly strange, then, though doubtless disconcerting enough, if at times our perspective prove faulty, and our picture distorted, just where most we flatter ourselves upon their fidelity. We can only hope for the best. Of one thing at any rate, we can be very sure, and therefore the more confidently and boldly go to work. I allude to the thoroughly partisan and biased character of our existing records. It is only through glasses deeply tinged with the prejudices and hatreds of the then living present that we are permitted to view those fierce conflicts. Just here, indeed, is the spirit of partisanship most flagrant, though least confessed, even as it was on the battle-field itself that contemporary passions and interests and ideals strove together in most determined and sharp-set antagonism. When the best that may be has been done, however, there still remains outstanding the baffling fact that, as a rule, the distinctive essence of the purely military aspect of the action, that is to say its strategic or scientific quality and *raison d'être*, finds but the very slightest and vaguest expression in the record. Such are the necessary discounts and allowances that must be brought

into the reckoning; while, over and above all this hazardous business of adjustment and balancing, one must be watchful to keep ever within the circle of possibilities, the technical horizon, of that age—yet alert to pick up, as well as resolute to follow, the faint track of evidence when at intervals all too rare it leads to some point of wider outlook over the confused and misty landscape.

Rightly or wrongly, I am persuaded that in the steadily keeping in mind the above simple truisms mainly lies the reason for the divergence of my views from those apparently now current. The divergence is by no means limited to the particular episode here investigated, but is perhaps equally pronounced in respect of the general historical development of the Art of War in Greece in the pre-Macedonian Age. Not yet, I make bold to say, do we possess anything that can justly claim to be called a History of the Art of War as practised by the Greeks before the Age of Alexander. A single Chapter of that History is what I hope here to have written. Not until all the principal episodes of Hellenic warfare shall have been submitted to the like minute scrutiny will it be possible to gather together the vari-coloured threads, and to weave them into a finished fabric picturing the historical development of Hellenic military art.

The story is well worth the telling. For the military achievements of that ancient world, fairly and reasonably estimated, were indeed very considerable. With financial resources and technical equipment of almost pathetic feebleness and simplicity, the men of those ages attacked not unsuccessfully problems comparable with those that have taxed the best brains, the almost limitless resources, and the stupendous mechanisms, of modern times. They have told us so little about it all, revealed so little of the secrets of their art, or of the difficulties of what they dared and achieved in this domain, that they risk being accredited with a good deal less than their due.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL PROBLEM

ἐνθαῦτα ἀναγκαίη ἐξέργομαι γνώμην ἀποδέξασθαι ἐπί-
φθονον μὲν πρὸς τῶν πλεόνων ἀνθρώπων, ὁμῶς δὲ τῇ γέ-
μοι φαίνεται εἶναι ἀληθὲς οὐκ ἐπισχίσω. HERODOTOS, 7. 139.

AMONG the more elaborate pieces of purely military history written by Thucydides is the Section of fifteen Chapters, in his Fifth Book, dealing with the campaign in Arkadia by which, in the late summer of 418 B.C., king Agis shattered the far-reaching designs of Alkibiades, and restored the tarnished prestige of Sparta. According to Thucydides, this achievement was due more to good luck than to good management; not in any wise is it exhibited as the reasonably forecast outcome of cunningly contrived, if somewhat delicately articulated, machinery. Something less than justice is thereby done to one of the most remarkable figures of that time. Both by Thucydides himself, and, after his example, by modern historians, the Spartan king, in his connexion with these operations at any rate, is pilloried as a bungler, indeed, as little better than a fool. It would seem then that the time has come for the question to be asked, whether that verdict is justified.

The pitch of elaboration to which the account of the episode has been brought by Thucydides is not solely due to its intrinsic importance or interest. That principle, in fact, will not explain the variation of scale observable in his History of the War. In the case before us, explanation has been sought, in part, in the suggestion¹ that the historian had been personally interested in the operations, not indeed as active participator, but as spectator. If that was really so, then we have before us a definite specimen of the outcome of

¹ Thirlwall, *Hist. of Greece* (new ed., in 8 vols., 1845-), 3. 338¹: "The eye-witness seems to speak, when he says, v. 68, τὸ στρατόπεδον τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων μείζον ἐφάνη." Grote, *History of Greece* (ed. in 12 vols., 1884), 6. 351: "From his language it is conjectured, with some probability, by Dr. Thirlwall and others, that he was himself present at the battle, though in what capacity, we cannot determine, as he was an exile from his country."

that autopsy which Thucydides himself, in this very Book of his History, reckons² as a set-off against his years of exile. It would be a great thing to have the assurance that Thucydides was writing here with his own eye upon the actual object, setting down his own first-hand impressions of events. Upon the whole, however, the hypothesis that the passage before us is of this welcome character is not borne out by internal evidence. Rather the contrary. We are soon forced to the conclusion that no proof, barely even a suggestion, of the historian's personal presence at the scene of action is to be found in the narrative. And still less is there ground for believing that the key to the significance of the details of operations was ever in his possession. Whatever his relations generally to the belligerents, during his exile, they did not imply access to official secrets—neither that nor anything like it. In truth, the entire narrative of this campaign, a narrative at first blush so minute, so painstaking and so straightforward, is revealed by dispassionate analysis as simply a tissue of incoherencies, irrelevancies, and even downright absurdities. This curious and startling result calls for no special shrewdness for its discovery. The wonder rather is that its recognition and enunciation should have been deferred so long.

That the narrative to be discussed really does leave a good deal to be desired in point of coherence, is tacitly admitted by even the most conservative of the modern historians reproducing the story of the campaign as given by Thucydides. Shrinking from its thoroughgoing criticism as from a sort of impiety, they nevertheless find themselves driven inevitably to the attempt to patch up its more obvious lacunae, with such material as comes readiest to hand. So Mitford, who gives it as follows:³ "Unable otherwise to compose the disorder, they marched after the Spartan king. This was precisely what Agis desired: and to provoke it, he had been employing his troops in diverting the course of a mountain stream so as to damage the Mantineian lands. Being informed that the confederates nevertheless persevered

² Thuc. 5. 26.

³ Mitford, *Hist. of Greece* (ed. in 8 vols., 1835-), 3. 255.

in holding their strong post, he was returning, without due precaution, toward the hills, when he suddenly met them advancing in order of battle along the plain." Nearly the half of the above extract has no sort of representative in the actual words of Thucydides himself, but is pure invention on Mitford's part.

Thirlwall finds himself in the same predicament:⁴ "In the mean while Agis was returning to ascertain the effect of his manœuvre, with the design of occupying the ground where he had posted himself the day before. A projecting ridge concealed the Argive-Athenian army from his view, until by a sudden turn the head of his column came close upon it."

Observe, lastly, the explanatory addition that Grote feels himself compelled here and there to foist upon the narrative of Thucydides:⁵ "No stratagem however was necessary" to induce the Argeians and their allies to abandon their first position—a statement directly at variance with that of Thucydides himself. Again, Agis, he says, returned to the Herakleion because "he had found himself disappointed in his operations upon the water. He had either not done so much damage, or not spread so much terror, as he had expected: and he accordingly desisted, putting himself again in march to resume his position at the Herakleion, and supposing that his enemies still retained their position on the hill".

These extracts may serve as typical specimens. The diversity of explanatory detail gratuitously inserted for the purpose of bonding the ill-fitting blocks of the Thucydidean construction is clear indication that all is not as it should be—that, in short, the superficial smoothness and coherence of the ancient narrative itself is illusory.

The scientific quality of Thucydides as a military historian, or as historian in a more general sense, is, of course, not here primarily in point. Our immediate interest in these Chapters is of a more limited and technical character. Military operations are described by the ancient historians, as a rule, with such scantiness of detail, that when the greatest of them

⁴ *Hist.* 3. 338.

⁵ *Hist.* 6. 348.

takes in hand to give an elaborate account of one particular campaign, from start to finish, his narrative *prima facie* should rank as a cardinal document for the student of Hellenic military art. Yet astonishingly little attention has been paid to this document by the professed historians of ancient tactics and methods of war.⁶ The primary object of the following Chapters is to analyse the Thucydidean data as exactly as possible, in order that by combining our results with the evidence drawn from topography, as well as with a modicum of conscientious imagination, we may reconstruct the entire course of operations with somewhat more of coherence than has hitherto been achieved. This, not only because it has been the fate of this episode to be treated for the most part with a complacent superficiality that either ignores its real difficulties or bluntly denies their existence, but more especially because the true story of the campaign possesses independent value of the highest order as a document for the historian of Hellenic warfare. For within this same theatre of war fell no fewer than five campaigns, three of which have been recorded, in greater or less detail, by the three principal military historians of ancient times, who were themselves contemporary with the event.⁷ They thus furnish us with outstanding examples of the conduct of war and pitched battles in Greece at intervals of fifty-six, and of one hundred and fifty-six, years, respectively, during the centuries of its active development—a series invaluable for the student

⁶ For example, a single page is all that is devoted to it in H. Delbrück's book, which is nevertheless entitled: "A History of the Art of War" (*Geschichte der Kriegskunst im Rahmen der politischen Geschichte*—Erster Teil: das Altertum; 2nd ed., 1908, p. 118).

⁷ The following actions were fought in the immediate neighbourhood of Mantinea:

- (1) 418 B.C. Lakedaimonians and Tegeans under king Agis defeat the forces of Mantinea, Argos, and Athens. Authority: Thucydides.
- (2) 362 B.C. Thebans and Tegeans under Epameinondas defeat the Mantinians, Athenians, and Lakedaimonians. Authority: Xenophon.
- (3) 296 B.C. Demetrios Poliorketes defeats Archidamos of Sparta. Authority: Plutarch.
- (4) 243 B.C. The Achaian League under Aratos, and the Mantinians under Podares, defeat the Lakedaimonians under Agis son of Eudamidas. Authority: Pausanias.
- (5) 207 B.C. The Achaian League under Philopoimen defeats the Lakedaimonians under Machanidas. Authority: Polybios.

of the evolution of this most ancient of the arts, as practised under the very definite and peculiar circumstances of the Greeks. On this ground, then, it is desirable that the data of the campaign standing at the head of the series should at last be critically examined, in order that they may be combined in some intelligible scheme and sequence of events.

Sketch Map
of the Theatre of Operations
MANTINEIA-TEGEA
(based on the French Map of 1832)

TO ORCHOMENOS
TO ARGOS (KLIMAX ROUTE)
TO ARGOS (PRINOS ROUTE)
TO ARGOS (HYSIAI ROUTE)

ELYMIA (LEVIDHI)
KAKURI
SIMIADHES
Katak. Kapsia
Kapsia
Katak. Gadsuna
Katak. Mazoneika
Katak. Milia
MYTIKA (SKOPE)
MT MAINALOS
MERKOVUNI
TRIPOLITSA
AG. SOSTIS
MERTSAÜSSI
TEGEA
PIALI
PALLANTION
TAKA SWAMP
KAPARELI
KRAVARI (BOREION)

MT ARMENIADHES
ALESION
ARGON PEDION
MANTINEIA
Kalyvia
Miliais
STRAVOMYTI
KORPHYNI
LUKA
KAPNISTRA
ZANONISTA R.
STENO
VERTSOVA
GARATES RIVER
PARTHENION

SCALE 0 1 2 3 4 5 MILES

Railway
Roads (Ancient line, partly coincident with modern)
Ancient Names **PALLANTION**
Modern Names **PIALI**

Roads (Ancient line, partly coincident with modern)

Modern Names **PIALI**

CHAPTER III

THE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS

ἵνα δὲ μὴ τοῖς ἀγνοοῦσι τοὺς τόπους ἀσαφῆ τὰ λεγόμενα
γίγνηται, πειρασόμεθα διὰ βραχέων ἀγαγεῖν εἰς ἔννοιαν
τῆς εὐκαιρίας καὶ θέσεως αὐτῶν τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντας.

POLYBIOS, I. 41.

THE south-eastern portion of the Arkadian plateau constituting the central citadel of the Peloponnese is a long figure-of-eight plain interposed between roughly parallel mountain ranges—that of Mainalos on the west, and that of Artemision-Parthenion on the east. The length of this plain, from Kakuri¹ in the north at the foot of the great mountain Armenia (Armeniadhēs) to Kapareli overlooking the Taka swamp at the foot of Mount Kravari (ancient Boreion) in the south, is not far short of twenty miles. This plain it was, that constituted the principal part of the territory over which, in ancient times, the two considerable cities of Mantinea and Tegea severally held sway. For the plain falls naturally into two well-marked sections. The northern section, once the territory of Mantinea, is about seven miles long, from north to south, and about three miles across at its widest part; southwards it marches with the section, about seven miles across, that belonged to Tegea. The line of division between the two sections is indicated by two high spurs, which thrust forward from the mountains on either side, and thus reduce the intervenient level ground to a strip or neck little more than a single mile in width. The western spur, now called Mytika,² protrudes abruptly and in a curiously dominant manner from the foot-hills of Mainalos, at a point about four miles to the north of the modern town of Tripolitsa. A lower shoulder of this projection, the last fall to the plain, seems to have borne in ancient times the name of Skope (Outlook);³ upon it are still to be seen the

¹ Κακοῦρι. Καπαρέλι.

² Μύτικα.

³ The thing is not as simple as it might seem. The place to which the mortally wounded Epameinondas was borne, from which he gazed upon the fight, where he breathed his last, was named Skope, we are told (Paus. viii. 11. 7: ἐκομίζουσιν ἔτι ζῶντα ἐκ τῆς παρατάξεως αὐτόν. ὃ δὲ τέως μὲν . . . ἐταλαιπώρει καὶ ἐς τοὺς

remains of a watch-tower, of Hellenic construction, overlooking the territories of the two rival cities. The opposite projection is a long ridge, now called Kapnistra,⁴ which, unlike the Mytika spur, runs not outwards or perpendicularly to the meridional axis of the plain, but approximately parallel to it, inwards and upwards in the direction of the site of Mantinea.

From the main expanse, four subsidiary plains or offsets,⁵ of no great area, divagate into the surrounding hills. Three of these recesses communicate with the Mantineian section of the main plain. On the west, the comparatively low bare ridge that runs parallel to the lofty rampart of Mainalos is breached, about half-way down its length, by a short defile giving access to the narrow plain, or rather the long valley, of Alkimedon,⁶ which extends southwards from the neighbourhood of Levidhi, a village on the margin of the basin that constituted the territory of ancient Orchomenos. On the east, the ridge anciently called Alesion⁷ (now Barberi) projects

μαχομένους ἀφέωρα, ὁπόθεν δὲ ἀπέβλεπεν ἐς αὐτοὺς ὠνόμαζον Σκοπὴν οἱ ἔπειτα . . . καὶ αὐτὸν ἀφέντα τὴν ψυχὴν ἔθαψαν ἐνθα σφίσιν ἐγένετο ἡ συμβολή). But Pausanias does not say that the Skope was an eminence; and he seems to imply that the actual place of burial was different, though no doubt not far off. In spite of this, the Skope is commonly identified with the Mytika height, and the remains of the fourth-century Greek tower, the 'Windmill' (Ἀνεμόμυλος), as it is now popularly called, standing on its last fall to the plain, is locally regarded as the very tomb of Epameinondas. But this is no genuine popular tradition, but a pseudo-tradition created and kept alive by the modern schoolmaster. It is possible that the name Skope, and perhaps also the tower itself, may be earlier than the time of Epameinondas, and that they may have given rise to the tradition of his last moments. The doubt, as to whether the hill and tower bore the name Skope in ancient times at all, and as to their connexion in fact or tradition with Epameinondas, has of course no bearing upon the here suggested significance of hill and watch-tower in relation to the frontier of Mantinea. For the tower, see W. Loring, in *Journ. of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 15 (1895), pp. 82 ff.

⁴ Καπνίστρα.

⁵ These recesses or inlets resemble Bays in a rugged coast-line; and so the ancients actually called them—Xen. *Hell.* vi. 5. 17: ἔλαθε στρατοπεδευσάμενος εἰς τὸν ὀπισθεν κόλπον τῆς Μαντινικῆς, μάλα σύνεγγυς καὶ κύκλῳ ὄρη ἔχοντα (he is alluding to the Argon Pedion).

⁶ Paus. viii. 12. 2: προελθόντι δὲ σταδίους τριάκοντα πεδίον τε ὀνομαζόμενον Ἀλκιμέδων καὶ ὑπὲρ τοῦ πεδίου τὸ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἡ Ὀστρακίνα. Pausanias is here describing the direct route from Mantinea, through the defile of Kapsia. The valley of Alkimedon can also be entered by way of a similar defile about two miles farther to the north, that of Simiadhes.

⁷ Paus viii. 10. 1: ἰόντι ἐς Τεγέαν ἐστὶν ἐν ἀριστερᾷ τῆς λεωφόρου παρὰ τοῖς

southwards from Mount Armenia, in a direction parallel to that of the range of Artemision, and so runs out towards the Kapnistra ridge. The southern extremity of Alesion thus stands *vis-a-vis* with the northern extremity of Kapnistra; so that the two together constitute a wide portal through which access is gained, south-eastwards, between Korphynti and Kapnistra, to the little plain of Luka,⁸ or north-eastwards, between Korphynti and Stravomyti, to the basin below Tsipiana, interposed between Alesion and the towering heights of Artemision. This basin of Tsipiana bore in ancient times the name of Argon Pedion, or Fallow Plain.⁹ The fourth off-shoot from the main plain is an extension of the Tegean section eastwards, in the direction of Mount Parthenion. This recess or bay is entered by way of the defile (Steno) through which run both the railway and the modern highway, to ascend by toilsome windings, though by divergent routes, the mountain-barrier of Parthenion interposed between Arkadia and Argolis. Through this same defile flows also the river Sarandapotamos,¹⁰ making for the katavothras at the foot of Mount Parthenion, north-east of the village of Vertsova.

Obviously, both Mantinea and Tegea, commanding as they did the main avenues of communication between the

Μαντινέων τείχεσι χωρίον ἐς τῶν ἱππων τὸν δρόμον, καὶ οὐ πόρρω τούτου στάδιον, ἐνθα ἐπὶ τῷ Ἀντίνῳ τὸν ἀγῶνα τιθέασιν. Ὑπὲρ δὲ τοῦ σταδίου τὸ ὄρος ἐστὶ τὸ Ἀλήσιον. The length of the entire ridge is about 7 kil., and its highest point about 250 m. above the plain. According to Fougères, *Mantinee*, p. 18, the southern end of the ridge is called Ἀλογόβραχος, the northern portion Γελοδόβραχος, i.e. βράχος τῆς ἀγελάδας—Horse Ridge and Cow Ridge respectively. My informants knew only the name Barbéri (μπαρμπέρι), for at any rate the southern end of the ridge (and so also H. Lattermann, in *Jahrb. d. arch. Inst.* xxviii, 1913—*Arch. Anzeig.* Sp. 418).

⁸ Λουκά. Κορφύνι. Στραβομύτη. Τσιπιανὰ. Τσιπιανὰ occupies the site of the ancient Nestane—see Frazer, *Paus.*, vol. 4. 199 (note on Paus. viii. 7. 4).

⁹ Paus. viii. 7. 1: ὑπερβαλόντα δὲ ἐς τὴν Μαντινικὴν διὰ τοῦ Ἀρτεμισίου πεδίου ἐκδέχεται σε Ἀργὸν καλούμενον, καθάπερ γε καὶ ἐστὶ τὸ γὰρ ὕδωρ τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ κατερχόμενον ἐς αὐτὸ ἐκ τῶν ὀρέων ἀργὸν εἶναι τὸ πεδίου ποιεῖ, ἐκώλυέ τε οὐδὲν ἂν τὸ πεδίου τοῦτο εἶναι λίμνην, εἰ μὴ τὸ ὕδωρ ἠφανίζετο ἐς χάσμα γῆς. Note that Leake fell into inextricable confusion about all this region, through misplacing the Fallow Plain, which he identified with the recess of Luka, several miles to the south of the ridge of Tsipiana. See Frazer, *Paus.* 4. 197.

¹⁰ Σαρανταπόταμος (for which see Frazer, *Paus.* 4. 443 ff.). For Βερζοβᾶ, id. *Paus.* 4. 445.

southern parts of the Peloponnese and the Isthmus, whether by way of Argos or by way of Orchomenos, possessed high strategic value. In addition to her command of the routes to and from the Eurotas valley,¹¹ Tegea also lay astride the main transverse route leading from the western side of the Peloponnese to the Isthmus. The modern town of Tripolitsa, the only considerable place in this district, is heiress to the importance of both these once bitter rivals, as well as to that of Pallantion; which town, in ancient times, occupied the south-western corner of this Arkadian plain. Pallantion has utterly disappeared. Mantinea also has left no direct descendant upon her site. Tegea alone is represented to-day—by a group of prosperous villages dotted along the margin of the considerable area that was the site of the ancient city.

Among the physical peculiarities of this plain, as of the similar basins of Orchomenos, Pheneos, and Stymphalos, all in northern Arkadia, the *katavothra*,¹² or natural orifice of the subterranean drainage-system, is perhaps the most characteristic and important. The Tegean group of *katavothras* at the foot of Mount Parthenion, as mentioned above, engulfs the waters of the Sarandapotamos, which swings round to them in a great arc north-east of the site of Tegea. In the recess of Luka, and in that pit-like depression of Tsipiana (the Argon Pedion), are similar natural inlets or sinks for reception of the otherwise imprisoned surface-water. Other *katavothras* are to be seen at intervals all along the western edge of the Mantineian plain, as well as in the neck or strait between Kapnistra and Mytika. The prosperity of

¹¹ The three military routes from Sparta all converged upon Tegea—(1) the western route, by way of Pellana–Belmina–Orestheion–Asea; (2) the eastern route, by Sellasia and Karyai; and (3) the central route, by way of Sellasia and the Klisura. The last is practically coincident with the modern highway between Sparta and Tripolitsa. For all these, see the article by W. Loring, "Some Ancient Routes in the Peloponnese", in *Journ. of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 15 (1895), pp. 25 ff. The approximate distances are as follows: (1) Sparta–Pellana, 7 miles; Pellana–Belmina, 9 miles; Belmina–Orestheion, 10 miles; Orestheion–Tegea, 12 miles. (2) Sparta–Karyai, 20 miles; Karyai–Tegea, 9 miles; (3) Sparta–Tegea (by the Klisura), 27 miles.

¹² ἡ καταβόθρα is the correct modern form. Leake (*Morea*, i. 110) takes the word to be the plural of a form καταβώθρον, which he regards as an abbreviation of καταβάραθρον. But this is an error. The Greeks themselves used several terms. The Arkadian form was ζέρεθρον (Tegean, Δέρεθρον), Strabo, viii. 8. 4.

the ancient cities, like that of their modern successors, was largely dependent upon the efficient working of the drainage-holes of this great upland basin lying more than two thousand feet above sea-level, and completely enclosed by the lofty barrier of mountains.¹³

The disposition of the katavothras, along the western margin of the Mantineian section of the plain on the one hand, on the eastern extension of the Tegean section on the other, is sufficient indication of the fact that while the Mantineio-Tegean plain as a whole—the swamp of Taka in the extreme south being disregarded—falls from south to north, the fall of the Mantineian section is westwards, that of the Tegean eastwards. The critical line, or axis of elevation, lies in the neighbourhood of the Steno. North-east of the low heights now occupied by the villages of Ai Sostis and Mertsäüssi it becomes a question whether the stream originating to the south of the site of Tegea shall flow eastwards into the Vertsova basin, or northwards into the territory of Mantinea. What actually happens, is that the Sarandapotamos, with its tributary the ancient Garates, after flowing due north as far as the Steno, there swings away eastwards, through that defile, into the bay of Vertsova, and ultimately sinks into the katavothras near that village. The Zanovista, on the other hand, taking its start on the site of Tegea itself, does not follow the direction of the larger stream, much less unites with it, but meanders northwards on a course of its

¹³ Cp. Leake, *Peloponnesiaca*, 250: "In such an even level as this plain, nothing but a well-regulated system of drainage and embankment can prevent the several water-courses from winding over the plain and inundating it, instead of preserving their direction towards the several outlets which nature has provided for their discharge, and which she has proportioned to the several streams, though human industry is constantly required to keep the water-courses in order. The obstruction of the subterraneous channels themselves by natural accidents is another cause of inundation, and one which is not so easily remedied by art." For ancient times, see Paus. viii. 22. 8 (of Stymphalos): ἐσπεσοῦσα οὖν ὕλη κατὰ τοῦ βαράθρου τὸ στόμα, ἣ κᾶτεισιν ὁ ποταμὸς ἀνείργει μὴ καταλύεσθαι τὸ ὕδωρ. The result was, that the imprisoned waters formed a lake over all the plain, but drained away again when the katavothras became miraculously unstopped. Iphikrates, when besieging the town of Stymphalos, conceived the curious idea of stopping these drainage holes by means of sponges, and tried to put the scheme in operation, with unlooked-for results (Eratosth., Strabo, viii. 8. 4). Cp. the legends about the blocking of the drainage chasms of the Kopais area (Paus. ix. 38. 7, with Frazer's note on that passage).

own into Mantineian territory; and, having run the gauntlet of the small katavothras in the narrow part of the plain, falls at last into the katavothra lying a little way to the north of the Mytika spur.¹⁴ It is obvious that it would be no difficult matter to realize either possible alternative—of diverting the first-mentioned stream into the Zanovista channel, and so into the territory of Mantinea, or of tapping the latter stream and thus diverting its waters eastwards, into the bed of the Sarandapotamos.

These possibilities were in fact recognized, so it should seem, in ancient times also, and were the cause of perennial friction between the two cities. Of the two, Tegea occupied the more advantageous position, because the critical place lay within her own territory, indeed at her very gates. So long as the Sarandapotamos and its tributary were duly engulfed in the katavothras of Vertsova, all went well; but if, through accident or malice, those katavothras became choked, the basin of Vertsova was flooded, to a greater or less extent, and was lost to cultivation. By diversion of the stream at the critical point, its waters could be delivered northwards, into the Mantineian plain; where their ultimate fate, with that of a large portion of the Mantineian plain itself, would be determined by the condition of the katavothras north of Mytika. Diversion could be effected with ease, by means of a short canal connecting the Sarandapotamos with the Zanovista channel. If the Mantineians carelessly allowed the katavothras on their home territory to become clogged with rubbish, so that they were incapable of doing their work, so much the worse for themselves; they were entirely at the mercy of the Tegeans, who could thus at pleasure compel them to receive their surplusage of water, and could also cut short the supply from this source when it was required for irrigation of their own lands.

This general situation, no doubt, is what Thucydides has in view when he says that the water which Agis and the Lakedaimonians undertook to divert was a cause of continual hostilities between the Mantineians and the Tegeans, on account of the damage generally inflicted on the one or the

¹⁴ The katavothra of Milia.

other territory, according to its course.¹⁵ Unless in the lapse of centuries there has come about a change in the superficial conformation of the whole area, and therefore in the reticulation of the sub-aerial drainage-system, of such magnitude as to baffle all attempts at identification, what Thucydides says can only be referred to the streams above described, and to the possibilities connected with them. Whether his statement, which in itself, subject to proper interpretation, is true enough, is particularly in point in the context in which it occurs, is another question, and one quite independent of correct identification of the stream to which his words refer. What is to be remarked is that in the absence of some sort of amplification or modification, the statement of Thucydides is necessarily absolutely unintelligible to readers unfamiliar with streams possessing no outlet from their drainage-area, except through plunging into the bowels of the earth itself.

Clearly, the mere existence of the stream in question, whether on the one territory or on the other, entailed no sort of disadvantage; rather the contrary, seeing that it was a natural, and indeed quite inevitable, channel of drainage. Only in the event of obstruction of its complementary *katavothra*—a misfortune not always to be averted, even by exercise of the utmost vigilance—was the stream, thus balked of passage underground, apt to become a nuisance. The *katavothras*, then as now, demanded unceasing supervision; on which account it was sheer good luck if they were in a neighbour's territory, so that upon him lay the onus of keeping them clear, under penalty of himself being the first and chief sufferer in times of flood: for naturally it was over and about the choked *katavothra* that the foiled waters primarily and mainly accumulated. In the case before us, the mere ever-present possibility of the stream's artificial diversion into their own lands must have compelled the Mantineians to see to it that their *katavothras* were kept clear, or else to fight the Tegeans for the re-establishment of the channel conducting the water to the *katavothras* of Vertsova. So long as the

¹⁵ Thuc. 5. 65: καὶ ἀφικόμενος πρὸς τὴν Τεγεᾶτιν τὸ ὕδωρ ἐξέτρεπε ἐς τὴν Μαντινικὴν, περὶ οὐπερ ὥς τὰ πολλὰ βλάπτοντος ὁποτέρωσιν ἂν ἐσπίπτη Μαντινῆς καὶ Τεγεᾶται πολεμοῦσι.

drainage-holes were capable of doing their work, it mattered not a jot to which of them the stream made its way. Somewhere or other the surface water must go, and the Zanovista channel was just as natural and indispensable as that of the Sarandapotamos itself. The crucial requisite was, that by whichever channel it flowed the water should be able to get away below ground at the end of its run. Thucydides, however, has not a word to say about this vital assumption respecting the possible inability of the *katavothra* to do its work, or to do it fast enough—though it was this failure, and this failure alone, that entailed disastrous consequences to the one or the other territory. Not only has he entirely omitted to specify the peculiar and decisive element, the *katavothra* itself, but he has expressed himself as though it was a matter of pure accident whether the stream took a right-hand course, or a left-hand course, except on occasions when neighbourly malice intervened to control and exploit its vagaries. So far as his expression—"so apt is the stream to cause damage to one or other territory, according to the direction which it takes"—carries us, he might be referring merely to fortuitous damage arising from casual floods, quite irrespective of the line of the channel as marked out by nature or by the hand of man, and irrespective of the ultimate destination of the water; yet it was in connexion with that ultimate destination alone that dispute between the two cities arose, under the conditions explained. Thucydides himself may have correctly apprehended the conditions governing the general situation; but undeniably he has not made them clear to others. It is illogical and idle for modern commentators to invoke the physical peculiarities of the region, in order to explain and justify the historian's references to the stream, and yet complacently shut their eyes to the fact that the historian himself has not a syllable to say about those peculiar features, upon which so much depended.

The line of military operations with which we are concerned is marked by the two extremities, Mantinea and Tegea, the respective bases of the Confederates and the Lakedaimonians. Within this zone two features call for more particular mention.

About a mile to the south of Mantinea, in the plain, but close to the foot of Alesion, there stood in ancient times a sanctuary of great antiquity, dedicated to Poseidon Hippios.¹⁶ The site of this has been identified as at the Kalyvia of Milies, about 1,400 yards south of the Tegean Gate of Mantinea. In the time of Pausanias, a traveller going from Mantinea to Tegea by the direct road would pass this temple of Poseidon, and next would come to an oak forest called Pelagos.¹⁷ Pausanias omits to say how far one must go, after passing the temple, before one reached the forest. He seems himself not to have traversed this route farther than to the temple; for after remarking that a round altar on the main road indicated the frontier line, he goes on to describe what was to be seen by making a detour to the left, i.e. eastwards, from the temple. The altar here mentioned seems to have stood in the strait or narrowest part of the plain, between Kapnistra and Mytika, close to the foot of the former ridge. The road would here naturally keep hard by the foot of the hill.

When he describes the road leading from Mantinea to Pallantion, Pausanias remarks that the forest abutted upon it at a distance of about thirty stades from Mantinea.¹⁸ That distance brings us just to the extremity of the Mytika spur.

¹⁶ Paus. viii. 10. 2: παρά δὲ τοῦ ὄρους τὰ ἔσχατα τοῦ Ποσειδῶνός ἐστι τοῦ Ἰππίου τὸ ἱερόν, οὐ πρόσω σταδίου Μαντινείας. Acceptance of the identification proposed by the French excavators will necessitate some alteration of the reading σταδίου (cp. Schaefer, in *Rhein. Mus.* N.F. 5, 1847, p. 61). That σταδίου, if meant as a measure of distance, cannot be right, is clear also from Polybios, in 11. 14, where, in the battle against Machanidas, the Illyrians of Philopoimen's army flee προτροπάδην ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς Μαντινείας, ἀπεχούσης τῆς πόλεως ἑπτὰ σταδίων. Now these Illyrians, with other troops, had been stationed on a ridge along the foot of which ran the main road to Tegea (Pol. 11. 11: τὸν λόφον τὸν πρὸ τῆς πόλεως, ὅς ἀνατείνων ἱκανὸν ὑπὲρ τὴν ὁδὸν κεῖται τὴν Ξενίδα καὶ τὸ προειρημένον ἱερόν, i.e. the temple of Poseidon). This height is clearly that of Alesion. Taking account of the figure appearing in the passage of Polybios, Bursian (*Geogr.* 2. 216) would here in Pausanias read οὐ πρόσω ἑπτασταδίου. Seven stades would be 1,295 metres.

¹⁷ Paus. viii. 11. 1: μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἱερόν τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος χωρίον ὑποδέχεται σε δρυῶν πλήρες, καλούμενον Πέλαγος· καὶ ἐκ Μαντινείας ἢ ἐς Τεγέαν ὁδὸς φέρει διὰ τῶν δρυῶν. Μαντινεῦσι δὲ ὁροὶ πρὸς Τεγεάτας εἰσὶν ὁ περιφερὴς ἐν τῇ λεωφόρῳ βωμός.

¹⁸ Paus. viii. 11. 5: κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐς Παλλάντιον ἐκ Μαντινείας ἀγούσαν προελθόντι ὡς τριάκοντά που σταδίων, παρήκει κατὰ τοῦτο ἐς τὴν λεωφόρον ὁ τοῦ Πελάγους καλούμενου δρυμός, καὶ τὰ ἵππικὰ τὸ Ἀθηναίων τε καὶ Μαντινέων ἐνταῦθα ἐμαχέσαντο ἐναντία τῆς Βοιωτίας ἵππου.

About one stade (200 yards) farther on, there stood a temple of Zeus Charmon;¹⁹ at which point Pausanias breaks off his description of the road in this direction. Presumably the temple marked the limit of Mantineian territory on this side. The conclusion from these data is that the line of demarcation between Mantineian territory and Tegean fell between Kapnistra and Mytika. The southern portion of the Mantineian section of the plain seems to have been occupied, even as late as the time of Pausanias—say about A.D. 150—by the remnants of a primeval oak forest; which, starting from some point a little way south of the temple of Poseidon, and broadening out as it approached the gap, finally impinged upon the main road to Pallantion, and probably also quite filled all the space between the Mytika spur and the Kapnistra ridge.

So much concerning the question of the frontier. The ancient data here are precise enough, and not too meagre, while the actual physical features are distinct and strongly suggestive, so that the conclusion is cogent.

The second feature to which attention must be directed is the fact that, for ancient armies, and under ancient conditions of war, two defensive positions in chief were to be found on the given line of operations. We are speaking, of course, solely of normal procedure in regular order of battle, according to the methods of Hellenic warfare of that time. To a Mantineian army standing to fight a defensive action in regular order of battle, the narrow neck of the plain offered an obvious position on the frontier, covering the territory of the city against an invader from the south. This was the position held by the Lakedaimonians, in conjunction with contingents drawn from Mantinea and from Athens, against Epameinondas in 362 B.C.²⁰ Any and every hostile force bent on penetrating Mantineian territory, from the south, must necessarily traverse that pass. Either the eastern (Mantinea–Tegea) road, or the western (Mantinea–Pallantion) road might be selected for its advance, but by no

¹⁹ Paus. viii. 12. 1: τοῦ τάφου δὲ τοῦ Ἐπαμεινώνδα μάλιστα που σταδίου μήκος Διὸς ἀφέστηκεν ἱερὸν ἐπὶ κλησιν Χάρμωνος.

²⁰ Xen. *Hell.* vii. 5. 21 ff.; and Paus. viii. 11. 5 (quoted above, in note 18).

alternative route, short of crossing the mountains themselves, could the strait be turned along this line of operations. The Mytika portal was thus of crucial moment for the defence of Mantinea against an enemy operating from the direction of Tegea.

A second or inner line of defence was to be found some distance up the plain, towards the city of Mantinea. In this direction, a low shoulder swells out eastwards into the plain a little way north of the katavothra of Milies, while the end of the Alesion ridge makes a slight westwards bend, as though to meet it. The plain immediately in front of Mantinea is thus reduced to a breadth of little more than 2,000 metres. This was the line adopted by Philopoimen and the army of the Achaian League, in 207 B.C., in the face of the Spartan tyrant Machanidas.²¹

It lay entirely with the Mantinians themselves to decide whether, in the event of invasion, they should stand to fight at the outer portal of their territory, or fall back upon the inner line, and so fight close to the shelter of their own walls; or whether, as an alternative to engagement, they should content themselves with the occupation of a secure post of observation upon Alesion overlooking both town and plain. From their point of view, the correct policy was obvious. Under no circumstances must they yield to a temptation to give battle south of the Mytika-Kapnistra portal.²² Consequently, Mantinian armies standing on the defensive are never found taking post south of that principal line. Account being taken of the characteristics and capacities of hoplite militia, as well as of the conspicuous military advantages of their own situation, the Mantinians were well advised, in the event of attack from Tegea or from Sparta, to confine themselves strictly to their home territory, and to allow time to work for them whilst they maintained a purely

²¹ Pol. II. II fol.

²² The sanguinary battle of Laodikeion (Thuc. 4. 134: ἐν Λαοδικείῳ τῆς Ὀρεσθίδος), in 423 B.C., between Mantinians and Tegeans, with their respective allies, is no real exception; for that battle was only the sequel of an attempt on the part of the Mantinians to extend their power southwards, over Parrhasia and the upper Alpheios, thus menacing Sparta's western route of communication with Arkadia.

defensive and expectant attitude. If, in the long run, they must accept battle, they would do so under conditions that still showed a balance of advantage in their favour. Just this was the kernel of the military problem that Agis, Agesilaos, Epameinondas, and Machanidas, had each in turn to solve.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST POSITION OF THE ARMIES

"Something must be left to chance. Our only consideration, is the honour and benefit to our Country worth the risk? If it is, in God's name let us get to work."

NELSON, in Letter to Sir Gilbert Elliot, from Leghorn Roads, Aug. 11th, 1796 (NICOLAS, *Dispatches*. etc., vol. 2, p. 240).

ADVANCING from Tegea, Agis crossed the frontier unopposed, and having occupied a precinct of Herakles, on Mantineian territory, began to devastate the fields of the Mantineians. Unfortunately, Thucydides has not thought fit to indicate more nearly the situation of this Herakleion; nor have any remains been discovered, as yet, to fix its site. Since it was certainly on Mantineian soil,¹ search for it must be confined to the region north of the Mytika gap. We may perhaps infer from the silence of Pausanias that it was not at any rate very close to any of the main roads leading from the city. Assuming this, on which side of the plain are we to imagine the sacred precinct to have stood?

Upon general strategic considerations we should, no doubt, incline to fix it on the eastern side of the plain, arguing that Agis must have been anxious at all costs to ensure his own command of the Tegea road, dominated as it was by the long ridge of Kapnistra. It is interesting, from this point of view, to bring into comparison the movements of another Spartan king who in his time had some reputation as a strategist. In 370 B.C. Agesilaos invaded Mantineian territory.² On that occasion, however, Tegea and Mantinea were acting in unison, both being ranged in opposition to Sparta.

¹ This follows from the fact that the battle was fought on Mantineian soil (Thuc. 5. 67), combined with the statement, in chap. 66, that the Lakedaimonians were on their way back to the Herakleion, but evidently had not yet reached it, when they encountered the enemy.

² Xen. *Hell.* vi. 5. 15; καὶ τῇ μὲν πρώτῃ ἐν τῇ Τεγιάτιδι χώρα ἐλειπνοποιήσατο, τῇ δ' ὕστεραίᾳ διαβαίνει εἰς τὴν Μαντινικὴν καὶ ἐστρατοπεδεύσατο ὑπὸ τοῖς πρὸς ἑσπέραν ὄρεσι τῆς Μαντινείας. The enemy marched from Tegea, ἐχόμενοι τῶν μεταξύ Μαντινείας καὶ Τεγέας ὄρων.

Orchomenos, on the other hand, was the rendezvous of the contingents destined for the army of Agesilaos. Under these circumstances, it was clearly desirable for the Lakedaimonians to keep firm hold on the western road. Accordingly we find Agesilaos making his advance by way of Eutaia, first into the territory of Tegea, and from that into the territory of Mantinea, where he pitched camp at the foot of the western mountains. Here he lay in proximity to the entrance of the Alkimedon valley, which, running up towards Elymia (modern Levidhi), constitutes a sort of loop line between Orchomenos and the Mantineian plain. The enemy, for their part, having concentrated at Tegea, fell back into Mantineian territory, marching by the eastern road; their objective being to effect a junction with the Mantineians in the city. Not until his own allies had joined him from Orchomenos, having turned Mantinea in a night march, probably by way of the Alkimedon valley, did Agesilaos venture to quit his own side of the plain—and then was all but cut off by the enemy, who made sudden appearance on certain hills that commanded his line of retirement.

The heights occupied by the allies in 370 B.C., from which they threatened the column of Agesilaos, are to be identified with those occupied by the Confederates against Agis in 418 B.C. On both occasions we have to do with one and the same natural feature, the ridge of Alesion projecting like a bulwark in front of Mantinea.³ That ridge, from a military point of view, was of supreme value for the Mantineians, both because of the fact that it flanked the main southern road, and because its proximity to the town guaranteed convenient intercommunication at a point remote from all hazard of interruption by an enemy operating from the direction of Tegea. Further, Alesion terminates southwards in a steep face separated from the confronting northern end of the Kapnistra ridge by a considerable stretch of level ground. An invader established upon Kapnistra was not for that

³ It is about 500 metres distant from the eastern wall of the town. The walls now visible are those of the city as restored after 371 B.C. But the trace of the enceinte of 418 B.C. (destroyed by Agesipolis in 385 B.C.—Xen. *Hell.* v. 2. 7) will have followed a not very different line.

reason also master of Alesion. The latter height must be won, if at all, by an independent operation, of a sort that hardly fell within the normal programme of the Greek hoplite.

It seems reasonable, therefore, as well as in accord with the military necessities of the case, to conclude that the Herakleion selected by Agis for his advanced post on Mantineian territory must have lain upon the northern end of the Kapnistra ridge, over against Alesion. Posted on this promontory, Agis, besides covering his communications with his base at Tegea, enjoyed the advantage of immediately overlooking, not only the main plain in the direction of Mantinea, but also the Argon Pedion and the Luka recess. For the northern end of Kapnistra was conveniently close to the quarter in which routes from the Isthmus, or from Argolis, debouched upon the theatre of operations; an admirable position, if the design of the king was to sit down in an advanced post on enemy territory, there to await the co-operation of his northern allies.

Notwithstanding all this, it is possible that after all the Herakleion was actually on the opposite side of the plain. It is an old guess,⁴ that it lay near Kapsia, where, as above described, a short defile makes lateral communication with the Alkimedon valley. This defile, opening due west of the town of Mantinea, at a distance of about two miles, is too far up the plain to have served the turn of Agis; but the precinct may well have stood somewhat lower down, in the recess that is seen just beyond the Mytika spur. Posted hereabouts, the Lakedaimonians were not too far removed from the portal through which they had gained access to Mantineian territory; at the same time they were advantageously placed on the tender side, that is to say on the right flank, of any force that might issue from Mantinea with a design of cutting them off from that opening.

It is requisite at this point once for all to enter a caveat against inconsiderate application of supposed canons of

⁴ Curtius, *Peloponnesos*, 1. 243: "Wegen der Verbindung, in welche die Sage den Herakles mit Alkimedon brachte, lässt sich vermuthen, dass das von Thukydides in der Nähe von Mantinea erwähnte Herakleion unweit der Alkimedonebene an den Höhen von Kapsa lag." This Kapsa of Curtius is the modern village of Κάψια.

military art to ancient warfare. In a sense, of course, war is the same in all ages—*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. Its ultimate object is ever the same—to “break the will of the enemy in such a way as to make him conform to our political intentions”.⁵ Unchanged also is the method of attaining this end—by destruction of the enemy's military force. Notwithstanding these identities, differences in the technical machinery employed, in type of soldier, type of weapons, and what not, inevitably entail corresponding differences in procedure. We must be prepared, then, to recognize in ancient military operations a scale of values very different from that exhibited in the more developed art of later times. Not a few conceptions and terms—“sacred relics of military erudition”, “sundry battle steeds of historical critics”⁶—that are of the stock-in-trade of the historian of war as waged in later ages, will be found to possess no very high degree of significance for the earlier Hellenic campaigns; nor were such operations as hinge upon those conceptions the normal operations of Hellenic warfare.

It is true, then, that the suggested posture of the Lakedaemonians, north of the Mytika spur, laid open the entrance of the plain to seizure either by the Mantineians themselves, or by the Eleians, who as yet were free to manœuvre against the Lakedaemonians in what direction they pleased. Nevertheless, Agis, in his entirely justified reliance upon his own superiority in fighting power, could afford to regard that possibility with equanimity. For in the long run the two armies must come to push of shield, man against man, weight against weight, morale against morale. Just here lay the chief factor in the whole situation, in comparison with which all other factors were of a value quite inferior. Victory in the field alters all the conditions, settles all outstanding accounts; and here at a stroke would cancel whatever of strategic error critics might pitch upon in the dispositions and movements of the Spartan king.⁷ As the Mytika strait was not fortified,

⁵ Bernh. 2. 245: “To break the will of the enemy in such a way as to make him conform to our political intentions—that, and nothing else, is always the real object of the war.”

⁶ Expressions adopted from Claus. 1. 201, and 2. 126.

⁷ Bernh. 2. 283: “Certainly, tactical victory is what we must strive after first;

its occupation by the Confederates could have not a jot of significance, except as prelude to a general engagement, the issue of which was all but a foregone conclusion. Agis felt no call to play for safety in his choice of an advanced post from which to challenge the enemy. He stood to lose nothing, but to gain all, if by any means he could induce the Confederates to abandon their cautious attitude, and hazard a battle without more ado. The precise point at which the Confederates fought, was, for the Lakedaimonians, of but little consequence; not so for the Confederates themselves, who must look to it that they did not gratuitously risk losing their line of retreat to the city, in the only too likely event of unsuccessful engagement.

Upon the whole, then, we may doubt whether the posture of Agis was not actually on the western side of the plain, identical in locality, perhaps, with the position that Agesilaos was destined to occupy nearly half a century later. Apart from those religious associations, seeing that here was a place sacred to Herakles, the validity of which for the ancients, and not least for the Spartans,⁸ cannot safely be ignored,

victory always cancels at least part of any strategic error. But, on the other hand, a great crisis sometimes demands also a great venture; in the venture itself—it cannot be repeated often enough—a certain guarantee of victory is inherent. . . . As an axiom we can only state that the commander must always endeavour to gain the victory which, under the given conditions, is the most decisive, and that the chance of great results also justifies great risks. Yet the commander must, on the other hand, always remain conscious that a victory may compensate for any errors committed, and that success in battle itself is the main thing in war—the object and, at the same time, the foundation of all operations.” Cp. Machiavelli, *Arte della Guerra* (Book 1, p. 107, of vol. 5, ed. Firenze, 1820): “E chi sa bene presentare al nemico una giornata, gli altri errori che facesse ne’ maneggi della guerra, sarebbero sopportabili; ma chi manca di questa disciplina, ancora che negli altri particolari valesse assai, non condurrà mai una guerra ad onore. Perchè una giornata che tu vinca cancella ogni altra tua mala azione; così medesimamente perdendola, restano vane tutte le cose bene da te davanti operate.”

⁸ Grote, 6. 347²: “The Lacedaemonian kings appear to have felt a sense of protection in encamping near a temple of Herakles, their heroic progenitor.” Cp. Xen. *Hell.* vii. 1. 31: συνέβη δὲ καὶ πρὸς τῷ δεξιῷ κέρατι τέμενός τι καὶ ἄγαλμα Ἡρακλέους, οὗ δὴ καὶ ἀπόγονος λέγεται, εἶναι. τοιγαροῦν ἐκ τούτων πάντων οὕτω πολὺ μένος καὶ θάρρος τοῖς στατιώταις φασὶν ἐμπεσεῖν, ὥστε ἔργον εἶναι τοῖς ἡγεμόσιν ἀνείργειν τοὺς στρατιώτας ὠθουμένους εἰς τὸ πρόσθεν—this was at the ‘Tearless battle’, so called, in 368 B.C.; unfortunately, the locality of the battle cannot be exactly determined.

Agis may well have been led to choose this position by deliberate design of tempting the Confederates to try conclusions with him under all the apparent advantage that his rashness in laying bare his line of communication with Tegea seemed to offer them. The reflex effect of the abortive Lakedaimonian campaign in Argolis falls to be estimated in this connexion. Not many weeks had elapsed since the Argeians had won a strategic triumph, as they were flattered to believe, over this same Agis, who notoriously had averted disaster only at the price of humiliation and barely-escaped ruin.⁹ Whatever the true reading of events on that occasion, to whichever side it was that the final balance of advantage proved to have fallen, it still remained a fact that Agis, at the head of one of the finest Hellenic armies ever mustered, had preferred not to accept the chances of battle. It was quite inevitable that the counsels of the Confederates should be strongly coloured by that recent experience.

Agis was doomed to disappointment. True, the Confederates came out of the town in force—but not into the plain to fight. They went up instead to the broad plateau of Alesion, and in this strong post of observation quietly remained.¹⁰ Whatever their ultimate design, for the present at all events they clearly had no intention of coming down to fight a general action in the plain at their feet. Under the circumstances this was a highly intelligent method of conducting the defence, though one that was extremely inconvenient for the Lakedaimonians. It was, indeed, hardly playing the game by book; for by all precedent the Man-

⁹ Thuc. 5. 59: τὸ μὲν οὖν πλῆθος τῶν Ἀργείων καὶ τῶν συμμάχων οὐχ οὕτω δεινὸν τὸ παρὸν ἐνόμιζον, ἀλλ' ἐν καλῷ ἐδόκει ἡ μάχη ἔσεσθαι, καὶ τοὺς Λακεδαιμονίους ἀπειληφέναι ἐν τῇ αὐτῶν τε καὶ πρὸς τῇ πόλει. And chap. 60: οἱ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι καὶ οἱ σύμμαχοι εἶποντο μὲν ὡς ἡγεῖτο διὰ τὸν νόμον, ἐν αἰτίᾳ δ' εἶχον κατ' ἀλλήλους πολλῇ τὸν Ἄγιν, νομίζοντες ἐν καλῷ παρατυχὸν σφίσι συμβαλεῖν καὶ πανταχόθεν αὐτῶν ἀποκλεισμένων καὶ ὑπὸ ἱππέων καὶ πεζῶν οὐδὲν δράσαντες ἄξιον τῆς παρασκευῆς ἀπιέναι. This belief of the Lakedaimonians and their allies was shared also by the Argeians—chap. 60: νομίζοντες κάκεινοι μὴ ἂν σφίσι ποτὲ κάλλιον παρασχὸν Λακεδαιμονίους διαπεφυγέναι.

¹⁰ An example of surprise. Cp. Claus. 1. 199: "We are not now speaking of the particular surprise which belongs to the attack, but of the endeavour by measures generally, and especially by the distribution of forces, to surprise the enemy, which can be imagined just as well in the defensive, and which in the tactical defence particularly is a chief point."

tineians should have rescued their farms from pillage and fire by acceptance of the wager of battle. It was for Agis once more to make a move. Despite the formidable nature of the task, he seemed to have no alternative—if bent he was on a military decision—but to call upon his troops for a supreme effort, and to carry the fight to the Confederates on the Alesion heights.

CHAPTER V

THE STRATAGEM OF KING AGIS

“Ever to remain active, ever to undertake something; never, without urgent necessity, to sit still and wait—that is what is required of a commander.”

F. VON BERNHARDI, *On War of To-day* (translation by K. VON DONAT, vol. 2, p. 343).

ACCORDING to Thucydides, the Lakedaimonians had already set about assaulting the heights occupied by the Confederates—had indeed actually advanced within range of missiles—when they suddenly halted, faced about, and then drew off down the hill and across the plain southwards, and so ultimately disappeared from view, leaving the Confederates agape with astonishment. Sudden apostrophe from the lips of some old Spartan broke the spell under which up to that moment the Lakedaimonians had lain, and with eyes opened at a stroke to the desperate nature of the business upon which they were embarked, both king and army discreetly and incontinently retreated—mightily glad, one imagines, that the enemy was too slow to collect his scattered wits and come pouring down at their heels to convert retreat into headlong rout. As described by Thucydides, the whole affair is surely one of the most amazing to be found in Greek military history.¹

Now when a historian, of his own motion, sets out to describe in detail military operations, as such, his readers are entitled to demand of him some reasonable minuteness and accuracy, no doubt without too rigid insistence, in the case of the ancient historian, upon a laborious conscientiousness, with respect to the factors that contributed to the total of events. Of the factors in question, three—the factors of Space, of Time, and of Mass—explain themselves. To a fourth factor we may give the name of Circumstance, using

¹ There is no evidence to enable us to fix to this occasion the incident recorded in Plut. *Reg. et imperat. Apophtheg.* 190: ἐν δὲ Μαντινείᾳ κωλυόμενος Διαμάχεσθαι τοῖς πολεμοῖς πλείοσιν οὖσιν, εἶπεν, Ἀνάγκη πολλοῖς μάχεσθαι τὸν ἄρχειν πολλῶν βουλόμενον. Perhaps the words πλείοσιν οὖσιν would definitely discredit the connexion (cp. Thuc. 5. 68: τὸ δὲ στρατόπεδον τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων μείζον ἐφάνη).

that word here as a mere symbol to express the sum of a great variety of things—wind and weather, condition of roads and other means of communication and operation, equipment, food-supply, and the like; everything, in short, that directly bears upon and conditions the activities of the troops engaged. Some of these conditions are amenable to more or less of exact calculation, and more or less of human control; others again are incalculable, yet of tremendous and often one-sided import. Here, in fact, is the favourite playground of Chance.² More especially, under this head of Circumstance, is included a component that has at times proved to have more significance than all the rest taken together—that of the morale of troops, and their fighting-value. Beyond these four factors, of Space, Time, Mass, and Circumstance, there is yet a fifth factor, of the utmost potency—I mean the Plan or general Scheme of Operations in reference to which the entire series of the army's voluntary movements is conducted.³ This last factor, however, from the very nature of the case, is precisely the one that may possibly lie entirely beyond the historian's ken.⁴ Above all is that possibility likely to be realized in the warfare of the ancients, with their comparatively limited apparatus of contemporary record, and indeed their general carelessness about record

² Cp. Claus. 1. 49: "War is the province of chance. In no sphere of human activity is such a margin to be left for this intruder, because none is so much in constant contact with him on all sides. He increases the uncertainty of every circumstance, and deranges the course of events."

³ Bernh. 1. 90: "... the possibility of conquering the stronger enemy. But for such success we must always presume superior leadership, which can change almost everything to its favour. Here again we are confronted by an entirely imponderable power. It will never be possible to determine what the effect of this power will be in each case. The increase of force produced by the absolute confidence of the troops in their leaders; the terror spread by a great name; the elasticity of genius in the moment of danger; and the importance of ingenious plans of operation positively defy all calculation . . . no room is left for doubt that great generalship is of decisive importance, and that it can make up for greatly superior numbers of the enemy."

⁴ Claus. 1. 131: "As respects the tracing of effect to cause, that is often attended with the insuperable difficulty that the real causes are not known. In none of the relations of life does this so frequently happen as in War, where events are seldom fully known, and still less motives, as the latter have been, perhaps purposely, concealed by the chief actor, or have been of such a transient and accidental character that they have been lost for history."

in this field. Undoubtedly, much that was vital to the appreciation of ancient military operations perished immediately, leaving no trace beyond what is implied in the bare movements and actions of the forces engaged. The meagre report of these operations, subject to all the mutilations due to confused and fading remembrance, to prejudice, vanity, self-interest, and the incurable inherent faultiness of human records, constitutes almost our sole material for the inferential reconstruction of the thought or plan that originally inspired them.⁵

How slight and spasmodic the appreciation exhibited by Thucydides of such factors or elements as were well within his own cognizance or means of discovery, is patent. Only in connexion with our third and fourth factors, those of Mass and Circumstance, does he display on occasion a certain measure of comparative goodness, though a long way this side of completeness; yet even under these heads he has constantly omitted over-much—and that without inspiring us, by way of compensation, with assurance that always he has selected for presentation just those items that were really of most vital significance in the complex of events.

Returning to the narrative before us with the above remarks in mind, we observe that when at last the armies met for decision the right wing of the Confederates pushed back the Lakedaimonian left wing upon the wagons parked in rear of the phalanx, and killed a number of the older men there stationed. The Lakedaimonian wagon-train, which thus suddenly and only for a moment comes within ken, had assuredly not been brought up from Tegea for the first time on the morning of the day of battle. It must have been with the army from the outset, when the Herakleion was first occupied. How, then, had it been withdrawn on the day of the general retirement? Clearly, the train must have been

⁵ Bernh. 1. 51: "Even the plain descriptions of events by the participants themselves far too easily contain errors and wrong data, caused by ignorance of the connection of events and by deceptive memory; or suit vanity, factions, and political or other personal considerations. The inner working and moving powers are more often than not kept dark, all the more as they would otherwise far too often expose weakness or dishonesty, or because it is believed that real or apparent interests might be hurt by making them known."

in motion at the time that the attack was being launched against Alesion. Whilst the Lakedaimonians were carrying out that operation their Helots must have been hard at work getting away the wagons.⁶ Among the objects at which that operation aimed, one, we may divine, was that of amusing the enemy just in order to cover withdrawal of the train. Thucydides was either ignorant of this detail or blind to its significance in the totality of events; even as in regard to the entire campaign he displays no appreciation of the true nature and connexion of the operations conducted by the Spartan king. Looking at it through his eyes, one could only conclude that the abortive enterprise against Alesion was simply a piece of military folly, which the generals of the Confederates, with ineptitude on all fours with that of Agis himself, allowed to pass without the obvious and effectual reply. No doubt the actual objective situation and chain of incidents was by no means as simple and perspicuous as it appears to be in the dry and skeleton account of Thucydides; but it was his business and self-imposed task either to be content to give in reasonable fullness, but without any attempt at explanation or synthesis, the bare outward aspect of the whole complex of events, or else, in virtue of special knowledge or expert insight, to select and describe the really essential elements. That here he has done neither the one thing nor the other, is quite beyond dispute. Equally beyond dispute is it, that both the abortive attack and the immediately ensuing retreat must have been items of a manœuvre planned and executed in pursuance of some strategic design of which Thucydides never had the least inkling.

⁶ I think that Agis, in his first advance, his objective being the Herakleion, which we imagine to have stood on the western side of the plain of Mantinea, will have directed his column by the Pallantion road. His route thus coincided with that adopted in 371 B.C. by Epameinondas; it is marked by the points Tegea-Tripolitsa-Mytika. Agis perhaps started some time after midnight, so that he would be at the Herakleion by sunrise (for night march, cp. Thuc. 5. 58, and Xen. *Hell.* vi. 5. 17). When the train was withdrawn, it followed the same route in the reverse direction; the direct Mantinea-Tegea road being thus left clear for the march of the troops after the feint upon Alesion. I am at a loss, I may remark by the way, to understand Henderson's criticism (*Great War*, p. 324): "The baggage-train, however, seems an unnecessary addition to the narrative, if not to Agis' army." Thucydides must answer for that; my withers are unwrung.

Thucydides himself seems to regard the engineering operations at the stream as something of an afterthought on the part of Agis—this by-play apparently the precious inspiration on the strength of which that happy-go-lucky commander had courted wholesale disaster. We shall presently advance reasons for the total elimination of the hypothesis that the watercourses of the Tegeatis had any connexion with these manoeuvres. The point here to be made is that neither in the breaking-off of the assault, nor in the withdrawal to Tegean territory, was there anything of afterthought, anything of bankrupt or second-hand expedient. Acting from first to last with unfaltering energy and rare exclusiveness of purpose upon a reasoned and clearly conceived plan,⁷ Agis, throughout these operations, was striving directly, consistently, and, as it proved, successfully, for the most decisive result—that of dominating the enemy's will, and swaying it in a direction favourable to his own ulterior designs.⁸ The account given by Thucydides, on the contrary, inevitably suggests, even if not actually intended to suggest, that the king had never clearly thought out the strategic problem before him. He is depicted as a blundering irresolute fool, who knew not exactly what he would be after; apt in a moment and at a word to fly off at a tangent upon some fresh idea, each more futile than its predecessor.

If we are to be guided by the present configuration of the Tegean plain, there is, as already explained, only one place at which the diversion of the stream, alleged to have been undertaken by Agis, can have been feasible. The place in question lies entirely within Tegean territory, so close to the

⁷ Bernh. 2. 222: "A leader who is in doubt of what he can do and what he will do, will soon fail in resolution and action. A perfect clearness of mind alone gives birth to resolution. A commander must thoroughly think out his task." In the case of Agis, we see that "Resolution marches on a line with Judgement: I mean with Judgement of the heroic sort, of which the principal value is to distinguish the Extraordinary from the Impossible" (a remark of Cardinal de Retz, quoted in *Macmillan's Magazine*, vol. 51, p. 6—1884).

⁸ Bernh. 2. 246: "If we wish to express the fundamental idea of all warfare in a form of universal application, we must clothe it in the postulate: To use the forces available in such a way as to attain, in case of success, the most decisive effect imaginable—in other words, as to shake or break the will of the enemy in the surest manner."

town itself of Tegea that, in the given circumstances, there can have been no reasonable likelihood of the Mantineians and their allies even attempting to thwart the operation by force of arms. If anything was certain, it was that no Mantineian army would choose this moment of all others to venture so far afield as effective intervention would imply. Since the Confederates had already evinced their resolve not to risk a battle, even in close proximity to Mantinea, except under all possible advantage of position, and strictly on the defensive, how could it be reasonably imagined that they would now suddenly show themselves more complaisant, and consent to assume the offensive, on Tegean territory, and offer battle on ground chosen by the enemy?

The truth is, that the hydrography of the plain does not really furnish the key to the operations of the campaign. Thucydides is putting forward a mere guess, by way of explaining movements the rationale of which quite eluded him. When he represents Agis as withdrawing his forces from Mantineian territory with the hope that the Confederates would straightway assume the offensive, and follow him in order to put a stop to his engineering operations at the stream, we shall take leave to set aside his statement as being quite wide of the mark. The marching and counter-marching of the Lakedaimonian army was, of course, matter of direct observation, in respect of which ignorance on the one side and concealment on the other were equally out of the question; but did Thucydides himself believe, or expect others to believe, that Agis had taken all the world into his confidence⁹ as to the strategic objective of these his marchings to and fro—and that though he was proved by the event to have been quite out in all his calculations? Is not the gist of these Chapters obviously and simply this—that nothing at all came off in accordance with the Lakedaimonian programme? Even the concluding victory, however confidently

⁹ Contrast Thuc. 5. 54: when, in 419 B.C., Agis marched to Leuktra, on the Lakonian border, *ἦδαι οὐδείς ὅποι στρατεύουσιν, οὐδέ αἱ πόλεις ἐξ ὧν ἐπέμφθησαν*. Similarly, in Thuc. 5. 60, Agis observes the same reticence when he withdraws from Argolis—*ἀπήγαγε τὸν στρατὸν εὐθύς, οὐδενὶ φράσας τῶν ἄλλων συμμάχων*. Agis was evidently adept in the business of keeping his own counsel; 'Man of Mystery', we might call him.

counted upon by Agis himself, is represented by Thucydides as containing no small element of surprise, for both friend and foe. From beginning to end, the king is portrayed as a bungler, who is saved from the proper consequences of his own folly by the matchless bravery and steadiness of the troops which had the misfortune to be under his command. Yet here does Thucydides solemnly divulge what purports to be the grand secret, the deep-laid plan that was—entirely thrown out in the sequel. At that rate, what we have before us is not sober history, but satire—the story of the foolish king, and the great scheme that went askew. Unfortunately, the moral would not come as it should; for in the end victory remained with the fool.

Thucydides goes on to inform us, with careful precision, that the remainder of the day of retreat was devoted by the Lakedaimonians to certain operations at the water, and that their army next day once more got under march for its original encampment at the Herakleion. Presumably it had gone into bivouac the night before at the scene of its labours at the stream. We are to imagine, then, that by the time they set out on their return to the Herakleion the Lakedaimonians had accomplished their immediate object, of turning aside the stream; otherwise we are left with the unanswerable question, why a second, or even a third, day should not have been spent on the work. Presumably also the ulterior object, of inducing the Confederates to evacuate their position on Alesion, was deemed to have been secured, as a result of the previous day's labours with pick and shovel; for *ex hypothesi* the mere threat or show of diverting the stream had been held sufficient, or at all events as extremely likely, to scare them into that folly. We must go on, then, to inquire how it is proposed to account for the alleged consternation of the Lakedaimonians, when they discovered that the enemy had in fact come down from Alesion into the plain. That the Confederates should take this fatal step, had been the sole objective of all the Lakedaimonian manœuvres. Not a syllable in the narrative warrants the suspicion that, after all, the alteration of the channel had not been carried through or that somehow it had failed, or was thought to have failed,

of effect. True, we may well be sceptical, and hesitate to believe that at that time of year—late summer—the proximate results of an alteration of the channel could have been worth so much trouble; but that consideration only reinforces our conviction that Thucydides hereabouts is all abroad, and that what he pretends to reveal of the king's purpose is but a figment of his own imagination—or of that of his informant.

Waiving the question of possibility, let us endeavour to make clear to ourselves what exactly Agis stood to gain by flooding the lower part of the Mantineian plain by diversion of the stream. The utmost that could be effected by such methods, on the most favourable assumption—that the flooding was a huge success—was, that access to Mantineian territory would be barred in face of the Lakedaimonians themselves. If, then, the Confederates did not choose to emerge from behind the watery barrier¹⁰ duly to receive the castigation that Agis had in store for them, what was next to be done? The result must be an impasse, which would suit Agis least of all; since for him, as for Sparta, nothing short of battle, and battle won, could save the situation. As matter of hard fact, it was impossible to flood the Mantineian plain, to any serious extent, if the Mantineian katavothras were in working order. Who was to warrant the contrary? Was Agis merely gambling on the chance? Or, happy thought, shall we surmise that the Lakedaimonians, during the time they lay at the Herakleion, had been taking measures to choke all the katavothras on their side of the plain? Why, then, had the Confederates not intervened? They were expected to do so at a more distant point, according to Thucydides, and under conditions far less favourable to themselves. Escape from these perplexities is hopeless—so long as we persist in trying to save this apocryphal element,¹¹ the alleged design

¹⁰ Claus. 1. 266: "No battle can take place unless by mutual consent. . . . (p. 267) By the ancients everything was constituted with a view to measuring each other's strength in the open field free from anything in the nature of a hindrance . . . and a battle did not become possible until the enemy left his camp, and placed himself in a practicable country, as it were entered the lists."

¹¹ When I apply the term 'apocryphal' to the alleged design of Agis in falling back to Tegean territory, I do not wish to insinuate that no work of any kind was undertaken by the Lakedaimonians in connexion with the stream there. We may of course be very sure that no Spartiate or Perioikic hoplite was going

of king Agis in connexion with the watercourse in the territory of Tegea.

Describing the actions of the Confederates after they had descended to the plain, Thucydides says that next day they arranged themselves in the order in which they intended to fight, if fight there was to be. This statement, quite evidently, implicitly gives the lie to the subsequent description of the dismay of the Lakedaimonians when they discovered the hostile phalanx in position. For there is no evading the question, how it came about that the Confederates were actually thus on the look-out for the Lakedaimonians, while the latter had apparently not the least suspicion in the world of the enemy's proximity. We are not, it is to be observed, invited to picture to ourselves the nine or ten thousand infantry of the Confederate army as roaming haphazard over the plain, on the mere chance of running across a foe with whom they had lost touch overnight.¹² Far from that. The Confederates are described as already deployed in battle order, standing to arms to receive the enemy. Stimulated thereto by the dramatic retreat of Agis on the previous day, they had come down from the heights of Alesion, and taken up their position for battle in the plain. But who guaranteed that Agis would after all come back to give them a second chance of fighting? On the face of it, indeed, the Lakedaimonians had gone clean away, if not back to Sparta, at any

to be set digging canals for the likes of Tegeans. But the non-combatant Helots with the army may perhaps have been put to the task of clearing out the old canal. That, however, was mere byplay, of no military significance, and with no intended bearing upon the strategic situation. Henderson (*Great War*, p. 324) talks of Agis as "setting his engineers rather amusedly to work." Who are these "engineers"? Surely they are, to use his own words, "an unnecessary addition to the narrative, if not to Agis' army." But who in the world vouches for "amusedly"?

¹² But this seems to be the idea entertained in *Cambr. Anc. Hist.* 5. 272: "on the following morning drew up in battle-order eager to engage the enemy wherever they should happen to find him." Still further removed from what Thucydides actually says is the strangely garbled account given by Ferrabino, *L'impero atheniese*, p. 247: "Nell' attesa tenne per due giorni i suoi uomini occupati in lavori di sterro. . . . Ma già nel secondo giorno l'attesa fu interotta dal sopraggiungere del nemico. Il quale . . . abbandonò la sua forte posizione, e venne a offrire battaglia in campo aperto, nella piana appena ondulata che si distende a nord della cittadella di Tegea. . . . Questa volta Agide non solo non aveva conseguito il suo scopo, ma anzi s'era lasciato sorprendere."

rate to their base at Tegea.¹³ Pan, it should seem, the old Arkadian forest-spirit, had seized the opportunity of doing a good turn to his own countrymen and to his friends the Athenians at a single stroke.¹⁴ If the enemy failed to reappear, so much the better. The campaign was at an end for that time, with Agis once again baffled and discredited—and that at the cheapest rate imaginable, without stroke struck or man lost. In the sequel, as we know, the Lakedaimonians did reappear. Was their reappearance simply the outcome of an idle curiosity, for which they narrowly escaped paying dear? The only rational explanation is that their re-entry upon Mantineian territory was due to an assured and well-founded expectation of at last encountering on favourable terms the Confederate army, which up to that moment had clung obstinately to a passive defensive in a position virtually beyond reach of serious assault.¹⁵

There remains one last shift and objection—that the words of Thucydides mean no more than that the Lakedaimonians did not expect to discover the enemy at the precise moment and at the precise place at which they actually came upon

¹³ Thuc. 5. 65: τὸ στράτευμα κατὰ τάχος πρὶν ξυμμεῖξαι ἀπήγεν. What κατὰ τάχος looked like, as viewed from the standpoint of the Confederates on Alesion, is shown lower down, in what they said: νῦν ὅτι ἀποδιδράσκοντας οὐδεὶς ἐπιδιώκει. There can be no doubt about the, albeit simulated, character of the retirement; though probably enough ἀποδιδράσκοντας is a bit of exaggeration.

¹⁴ For this is the very home of Pan—cp. Paus. viii. 36. 8: Τὸ δὲ ὄρος τὸ Μαινάλιον ἱερὸν μάλιστα εἶναι Πανὸς νομίζουσιν, ὥστε οἱ περὶ αὐτὸ καὶ ἐπακροᾶσθαι συρίζοντος τοῦ Πανὸς λέγουσι. For Pan and the Athenians, see Herod. 6. 105.

¹⁵ According to Kromayer, the explanation is that Agis returned to Mantineian territory with the object of stopping up the katavothras on the western side of the plain or compelling the enemy to descend from Alesion if they wished to prevent his carrying out that design (*Antike Schlachtfelder*, vol. iv. 2, p. 210: "Nachdem Agis daher am ersten Tage die Ableitungsarbeiten bei Tegea beendet hatte, ging er wieder ins Gebiet von Mantinea vor, wie man annehmen muss, um hier das Werk durch Verstopfung der Katavothren zu vollenden oder die Gegner dazu zu bringen, sich in der Ebene zum Kampfe zu stellen, wenn sie diese Arbeiten hindern wollten"). He maintains that by the expression ὕδατος ἐκτροπήν Thucydides meant to indicate both parts or ends of the whole flooding operation—the diversion of the stream by means of the canal, and the stoppage of the katavothras. Kromayer is so far right as to recognize that the first is nugatory without the second, as already pointed out by me. But if this was all that there was to the scheme of Agis, why should he not have started with the stopping up of the katavothras? The Confederates were just as likely to respond to this first as last.

them; that the burden of proof lies upon those who would deny the reasonableness of this interpretation of the passage.¹⁶ Formidable as at first sight this counter-attack may appear, it cannot push us out of our position. It is but a makeshift bogey; unless its creators will consent to come to grips with realities, and propound some intelligible answer to the question: Where else in the given theatre, and under the given circumstances, can Agis have expected to come across the Confederates? Three possibilities, and no more than three, were before him. The enemy had either withdrawn within the walls of the town, or they were still on the heights of Alesion; or, lastly, they were out on the plain, in line or in bivouac. That the Alesion ridge was no longer occupied, was matter of immediate and infallible observation. The Alesion ridge was, and is, and must always have been, visible from every part of the plain, so that nothing could balk the observation or mar its accuracy. As for the alternative as between town and plain, upon what evidence should it have been inferred that the enemy, no longer visible upon Alesion, had retired within the walls of the town? The bare fact that the Confederates had not as yet shown themselves on Tegean territory, in order to put a stop to the diversion of the watercourse, certainly could not bear the weight of that inference; since it did not exclude the possibility of their having taken up some new position outside the walls, as was in fact the case, or of their being actually then in full march towards the

¹⁶ Cp. Jowett's note on Thuc. 5. 66: "It is useless to ask, with some commentators, why the Lacedaemonians, who had originally designed to draw the Argives into the plain, should have been dismayed by their actual appearance. Thucydides says that such was the fact; and it is clear from his narrative that, wherever they expected to find them, it was not at that moment or in that place. Agis had supposed that they would descend into the plain to prevent the diversion of the stream, but they had not done so; hence the Spartans were naturally surprised to find them in the plain at all. To meet such an imaginary difficulty it is unnecessary, with Campe and Meineke, to alter ἐξεπλόγησαν into ἐξεφάνησαν (the Lacedaemonians appeared in their true character), in itself a somewhat forced and feeble expression." This marvellous note, in which the only admirable point is the protest against alteration of the perfectly sound text, is a good example of that mock humility and naïve illogicality which is often regarded as a sign of quite extraordinary wisdom and sanity in criticism, instead of what it really is, namely the merest obscurantism. The prudent question must still be asked, though the heavens fall.

stream for the purpose of that intervention which Agis is represented as expecting and desiring. Until there shall be forthcoming some suggestion of valid grounds upon which Agis may be supposed to have based a conclusion that the Confederates had shut themselves up in Mantinea, we must maintain that the third possibility is precisely the one to which all rational conjecture pointed. So much at least must surely be admitted as beyond argument—that the mere possibility of the Confederates being then upon the plain, whether in march towards him, or standing to arms to receive him, was one that common prudence demanded should be kept steadily in view by a commander who proposed to himself to march his troops over the enemy's own territory. Whether that enemy was now in the mood for contesting his advance, was, so far as concerned his own duty of prudential vigilance, really irrelevant.

If, then, Agis suspected, as upon the evidence of his own eyes he was bound to suspect, that in the interval of the past twenty-four hours the Confederates had taken up a new position, are we to believe that he had formed no conjecture as to the point at which he was likely to encounter them? Twice already had he with his army traversed the ground on which the battle for which he was manœuvring must be fought. Was the check that the Confederates had given him by their adherence to a stubborn passivity to be interpreted as proof of such silliness and incompetence on the part of their generals that rational speculation upon their movements was foreclosed? The veriest tiro in his army must have been alive to the certainty that if the enemy had at last made up his mind to fight—and if he was then anywhere on the plain he could hardly now avoid being brought to action—he must be standing either at the outer or at the inner line; if not at one, then inevitably at the other. Choice of position obviously lay with the Confederates. Why should it be assumed that they were actually incapable, or were judged by Agis to be incapable, of exercising their choice upon rational principles in accordance with the conditions of the time? On the other hand, how can we be justified in assuming, purely in order to save the face of Thucydides, that Agis

was so woefully lacking of the commander's gift—the imaginative insight that divines what is happening on the other side of the hill?

The point of the inconsequence to which Thucydides stands committed is just this: on the one hand the Confederates, although, according to his account of the matter, they had no valid grounds for supposing that the Lakedaimonians must put in a second appearance on their territory, were on the alert, prepared for action; the Lakedaimonians, on the other hand, who had reasons of the weightiest for expecting to find the Confederates blocking their line of advance, if not actually marching to attack them, are represented as stumbling upon the hostile phalanx as though it had been the last thing in the world they expected to encounter. The Lakedaimonians having gone clean away hotfoot, the Confederates guess—quite correctly, as the event proved—that they will come back again; and therefore take measures not to be caught napping.¹⁷ As for the Lakedaimonians themselves, because they no longer see the enemy where they left him—the success of their own artful dodge being to that extent demonstrated—they conclude apparently that he is not anywhere in the neighbourhood. What is demanded of Thucydides is not so much an explanation of the incredible folly ascribed to the Lakedaimonians, as an explanation of the vigilance of the Confederates; who, upon the data as set forth by the historian himself, had no warrant for showing themselves so remarkably wide awake.

The truth is, that king Agis was just as little taken aback by the encounter as the Confederates themselves. He knew very well that when he marched this second time into the Mantineian plain he would discover the enemy in position for battle. He knew also, no one better, exactly at what point

¹⁷ And, no doubt, the Confederates will have been well served on this occasion by their sentinels (σκοποὶ καὶ κατοπτῆρες στρατοῦ—Aesch. Sept. 36), posted on the heights of Alesion, and Kapnistra, and Mytika, to keep sharp eye on the movements of the Lakedaimonian column. In Herod. 7. 183, the Greeks have ἡμεροσκόπους περὶ τὰ ὑψηλὰ τῆς Εὐβοίης, and in 7. 192 we read τοῖσι Ἕλλησι οἱ ἡμεροσκόποι ἀπὸ τῶν ἀκρῶν τῶν Εὐβοϊκῶν καταδραμόντες . . . ἐσήμαινον πάντα τὰ γινόμενα. Cp. 7. 219 (at Thermopylai). This would be part of the routine of such situations; there is no reason for thinking that it would be neglected now.

he could count upon coming across them. The problem for him had been to inveigle out of an all but inexpugnable position an enemy who had hitherto clung obstinately to a passive defensive. Relying upon the intrinsic superiority of his own troops, in respect both of manœuvring power and of fighting power, he was confident that if he could force an engagement on a fair field, that is to say upon the plain, in regular order of battle, he need entertain no fears for the result.¹⁸ In the grounds for this assurance of his the king found also the key to his problem. *Reculer pour mieux sauter*—to draw back like a ram, in order to butt the harder, as in after times Philip of Macedon put it¹⁹—that was the secret of his apparently strange proceedings. By his evacuation of Mantineian territory, under the circumstances and in the manner described, he calculated upon inspiring the Confederates with an illusory self-confidence and overweening contempt for their adversaries, in order that thus fortified they might come down into the level ground, and stand to accept battle there in complacent assurance of victory.²⁰ He would turn upon them, and smash them, before their Eleian allies could re-enter the theatre of war to redress the balance in the matter of numbers. Of the issue of the collision, there could be no manner of doubt in his mind; for, to

¹⁸ Cp. Bernh. 2. 445: "If it is an incontestable principle in warfare that we should always try to act offensively, we can act in accordance with it all the more successfully the more mobile and the more efficient the troops we command. On these two qualities of an army depends freedom of action, by which alone the conduct of war can develop into an art, and in which boldness and heroism thrive. These rank before numbers. The latter remain, nevertheless, always a substantial factor of success. The law of numbers remains unaltered, and cannot be violated unpunished. . . . But it is infinitely more important and more valuable to have efficient troops than large masses. This truth stands out all the more boldly the more we realize the importance of time and of the decisive direction."

¹⁹ Polyain. Strat. 2. 38: ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ φυγῇ τὸν βασιλέα τῶν Μακεδόνων Φίλιππον φασὶν εἶπειν 'οὐκ ἔφυγον, ἀλλ' ἀνεχώρησα ὥσπερ οἱ κριοί, ἵν' αὐθις ποιήσωμαι σφοδρότερον τὴν ἐμβολήν'.

²⁰ Compare the tactics of Brasidas at Amphipolis—Thuc. 5. 9. Cp. Grote, 6. 247: "He relied altogether on the effect of sudden sally and well-timed surprise, when the Athenians should have been thrown into a feeling of contemptuous security by an exaggerated show of impotence in their enemy." There was, of course, this difference in the two cases, that Brasidas had a force inferior to that of the enemy (Thuc. 5. 8.); not so much in numbers as in quality, as he himself supposed.

say nothing of the difference in quality, the phalanx of Agis, upon a moderate computation, would stand more than seventeen hundred shields stronger than that of the Confederates. At what cost the victory must be bought, would depend largely upon the way in which the king handled his chief tactical instrument, his native Lakonian infantry.

CHAPTER VI

THE FIELD OF BATTLE

ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἀλλήλοισι πόλεμον προείπωσι, ἐξευρόντες τὸ
κάλλιστον χωρίον καὶ λειότατον, ἐς τοῦτο κατιόντες
μάχονται. HERODOTOS, 7. 9.

THE curious and regrettable parsimony of topographical detail that characterizes Greek historical writing is well exemplified in the narrative before us. For Thucydides has contrived to tell the story of this memorable campaign at some length while making use of only four points of local reference, not a single one of which is defined with any approach to exactitude, or possesses any real significance for readers unfamiliar with the area of operations. Leaving out of the account the cities of Mantinea and Tegea, the two great portals from which the actors made entrance upon the Orchestra of Ares, we find this entire drama of slaughter presented with the aid of the barest minimum of properties, employed in a form highly generalized, even almost symbolic. A sacred enclosure, a strong place, a stream, a plain—three out of the four actually anonymous—such is the historian's meagre scenic apparatus. Thucydides himself, however, betrays not the least consciousness of poverty in this respect. His interest is centred upon the drama, that is to say upon what was done and said by his characters, so that hardly a glance is to spare for the scenic background of the action, despite the fact that the special kind of action here to be exhibited is conditioned in the most rigorous way by its topographical setting.

Among the topographical facts "not falling into oblivion through lapse of time", but belonging to his own day, which Thucydides could have given in the most definite and precise manner, are two of cardinal importance—the situation of the Herakleion, and the exact locality of the decisive conflict. With respect to neither the one nor the other has he vouchsafed any direct information. The situation of the Herakleion is left to be dubiously inferred from a balancing of

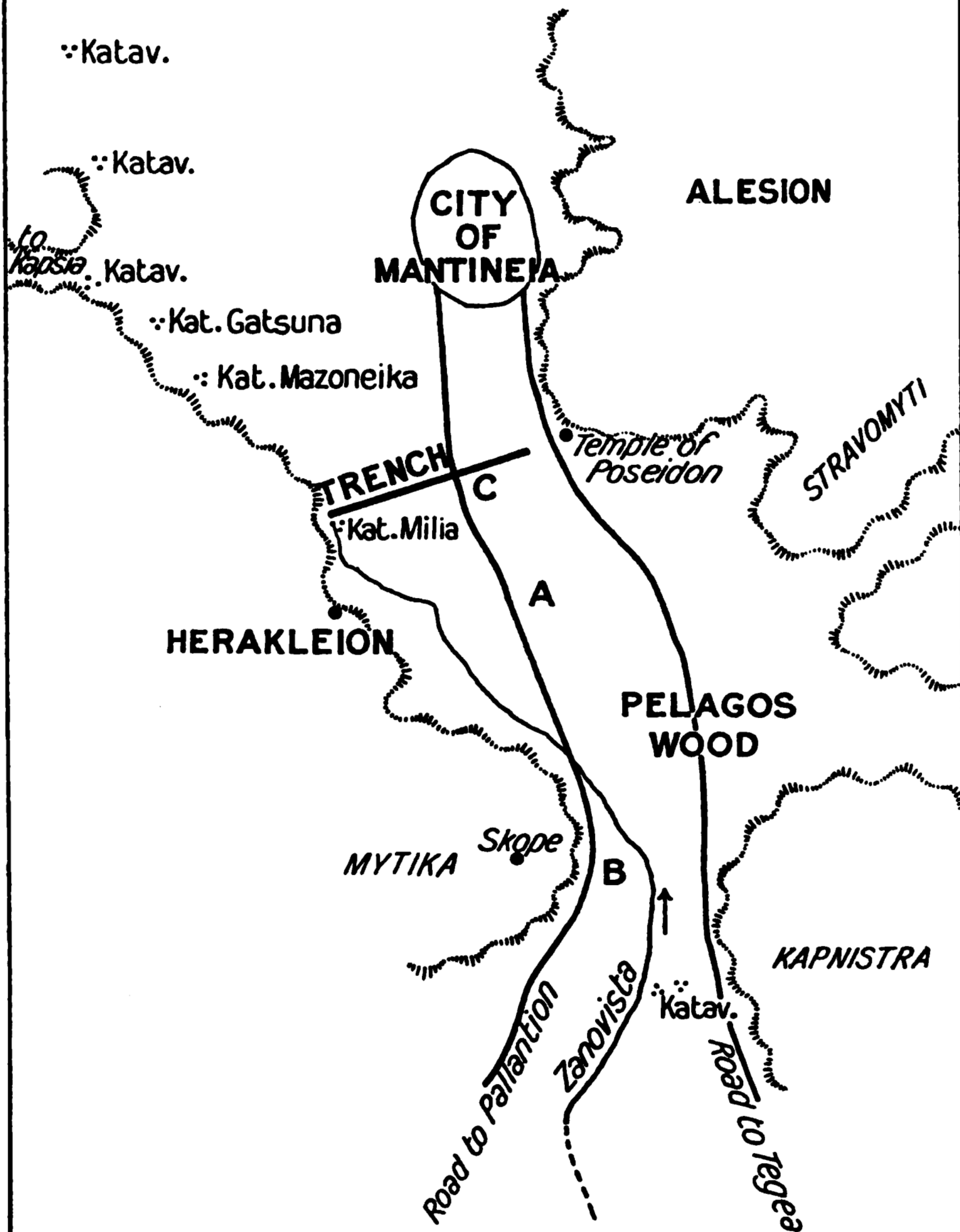
Sketch of the PLAIN OF MANTINEIA

Showing the Battle sites

A — Battle of 418 B.C.

B — " " 362 B.C.

C — " " 207 B.C.



alternatives; nor in reference to the scene of the battle has he felt any obligation to be more explicit. It was, we gather, somewhere on a line drawn between the bivouac of Agis near the unnamed stream on Tegean territory, and his previous camp at the Herakleion on Mantineian territory—neither point being more closely defined. Practically, of course, we may at once effect a substitution for both points, and say that the site of the battle must lie somewhere between the two cities. The one definite item of information, which leaks out in a purely incidental way, is that the action was fought on Mantineian soil. Consequently the field is to be sought not at any rate south of the Mytika-Kapnistra strait, which marked the frontier. We may congratulate ourselves that Thucydides has permitted us this much of certitude, as it were by oversight. Within the limits thus indicated—the town of Mantinea in the north, and the Mytika strait in the south—a choice between two positions was, as we know, open to the Confederates. Thucydides has been at no pains whatever to assist us to a decision between the alternatives; still less has he indicated the reasons that weighed with the Confederates in their choice of battle-ground. Yet these were matters of exact knowledge, facts of personal experience and personal recollection on the part of thousands among the historian's own contemporaries. Nevertheless he has preferred to fill his page with a summary of the customary glib platitudes preliminary to action, samples of the recognized stock-in-trade of every commander of civic militia in that age.¹ By the time one has reached this point in the History of the War, one looks to be spared a repetition of these thrice-familiar commonplaces.²

¹ Xen. *Mem.* iii. 3. 11.

² Before these chapters are reached, the following harangues purporting to have been delivered immediately before serious engagement are given by Thucydides in direct speech:

- (1) 2. 87: Peloponnesian commanders to naval forces in the Corinthian gulf.
- (2) 2. 89: Phormion's address to his men on the same occasion.
- (3) 4. 10: Demosthenes to his handful of men at Pylos.
- (4) 4. 92: Pagondas at Delion.
- (5) 4. 95: Hippokrates at Delion.
- (6) 4. 126: Brasidas to his men in Macedonia.
- (7) 5. 9: Brasidas to his men before the sortie at Amphipolis. Thucydides himself characterizes this type of harangue in a wonderful passage in 7. 69.

Given that the Confederates had resolved upon battle, the question of place became at once of vital importance—one by no means to be decided in the off-hand fashion in which the answer is presented by Thucydides. In this connexion also his narrative is lamentably defective. We may be sure that a great deal of hard thinking and acute reasoning lies behind the bald and passionless record, which here is so inadequate to the gravity of the issues. Nevertheless, the importance of the decision by no means necessarily implies that the considerations upon which it was based were of a nature so recondite and complicated as to be perhaps quite beyond recovery by us at this distance of time. We can indicate, at least in outline, some of the reasons that must have weighed with the Confederates in their final deliberations.

Before marching against Argos, some two months earlier this year, the Lakedaimonians had been careful to secure the co-operation of their allies of northern Greece. In the light of that fact the Confederates must have been alive to the possibility of their seeing those contingents once more taking the field against them. As prudent and sagacious men, they were bound to take this possibility into the account, and to be careful that they did not go out of their way to expose themselves to the risk of being caught at a disadvantage. That they should not wantonly throw away even the most trifling advantage in position was the more imperative since the point of numbers was obviously already given in the enemy's favour, even apart from this prospect of his reinforcement. So much at least was patent to the dullest observer. Now, posted on the Mytika-Kapnistra line, the Confederates were exposed to some risk of being taken suddenly in the rear by a force coming from the north. In contrast with the Mytika-Kapnistra position, the inner line confronted not only the main entrance of the plain, but also that of its eastern extension towards Artemision by which the northern allies of Sparta might possibly arrive. There were other considerations, no doubt, but without going farther afield we may rely upon this alone as adequate to support the conclusion that the line contiguous to the city must have been the one selected by the Confederates for the decisive action.

Additional support for this conclusion is found in the story of the consternation of the Lakedaimonians, when they discovered the enemy in line of battle across their path. Essentially false, adopted, if not indeed invented, as a peg upon which to hang a sketch of Lakedaimonian military organization, the story receives entirely satisfactory explanation through the suggestion here made as to the exact locality of the battle.

Discussion of the scanty topographical data led us to recognition of the following probabilities—that the common frontier of the two cities fell just in the narrowest part of the plain, the neck between the Kapnistra ridge and the Mytika spur, and that from the neighbourhood of the temple of Poseidon a forest extended southwards as far as that frontier line, if not beyond it. Now, if the Confederates are to be pictured as holding the frontier line itself, on the southern margin of the forest, they must have been standing at gaze upon the Lakedaimonians throughout the whole course of the advance of the latter from the neighbourhood of Tegea; and conversely, the Confederates posted thus, in battle array, on the verge of the forest, must inevitably have been no less distinctly visible to the advancing column. For how would one propose to conceal an army of ten thousand hoplites drawn up for battle? We are dealing, not with a horde of half-naked savages lying in ambush, each man ensconced behind rock or tree-trunk, but with the cumbrous formalities of heavy-armed civic militia. Between the one army advancing in column of route up the plain, and the other army deployed in phalanx to dispute its passage, the ground, then as now, was to all intents and purposes a bare expanse. There can have been absolutely no question of either army's springing a surprise upon the other.³ The tale of sudden startling discovery of unsuspected foe could hardly have arisen, if,

³ Epameinondas apparently relied upon the cavalry dust screen to cover his movements—Polyaen. ii. 3. 14: 'Επαμεινώνδας περί Τεγέαν διακινδυνεύων πρὸς Λακεδαιμονίους βουλόμενος ὑπερδελίους καταλαβέσθαι τόπους . . . προσέταξε τῷ ἱππάρχῳ μετὰ ἱππέων χιλίων ἑξακοσίων προῖππεῦσαι τῆς φάλαγγος καὶ πυκνὰς ποιεῖσθαι ἀναστροφὰς τῇδε κάκεισε. ὥς δὲ πλείστον ἐπανεστήσε κονιορτὸν ἐπισκοτῶν τοῖς τῶν πολεμίων ὄψεσιν, ὁ μὲν ἔλαθε κατασχὼν τὰ ὑπερδέξια· οἱ δὲ Σπαρτιάται, λήξαντος τοῦ κονιορτοῦ, τὸ γεγονός ἰδόντες ἐνόησαν τὴν αἰτίαν τῆς προῖππασίας.

as matter of fact and common knowledge, the Confederates had been posted along the southern edge of the forest in the neck of the plain.

The upshot is, therefore, that if the tale of the surprise has any basis in fact, the Confederates cannot have been posted athwart the Mytika-Kapnistra gap. Their line of battle must have been deployed clear away from the timber-belt, and the action must have been fought on ground unencumbered by that kind of obstacle. Since the battlefield is certified as lying within the territory of Mantinea, our quest is narrowed to the area included between the Pelagos wood and the walls of the city. Thus once again we are brought to the more northerly of the alternative lines of defence.⁴

If the limits of the forest, at the date of the battle, fell as we have surmised, it follows that the Confederates, from the position here suggested for them, cannot have descried the Lakedaimonians until the head of their column began to issue from the Pelagos wood. Similarly, the Lakedaimonians would hardly catch sight of the hostile phalanx until the leading units of their column began to draw clear of the Pelagos. It may well have been true that a good many of the rank and file of the Lakedaimonians and their allies were not a little taken aback to see the enemy thus confronting them with serious intent after twice allowing them to advance through the outer portal unchallenged. To assert the same of the High Command is downright puerility. Need we go on to remark that no sort of surprise can have been intended on the part of the Confederates? For what was to be gained thereby, if it came not also within the scope of their design to take advantage of the enemy's short-lived confusion,⁵

⁴ This same line was also adopted by the army of the Achaian League, against the Lakedaimonians commanded by a certain Agis, son of Eudamidas. The battle that ensued is described in Paus. viii. 10. 5.

⁵ How effective a sudden onslaught of even but a handful of men upon a phalanx thrown momentarily out of gear could be, is shown by the exploit of Brasidas at Amphipolis—Thuc. 5. 10: οἱ ἄνδρες ἡμᾶς οὐ μένουσι· δῆλοι δὲ τῶν τε δοράτων τῇ κινήσει καὶ τῶν κεφαλῶν· οἷς γὰρ ἂν τοῦτο γίγνηται, οὐκ εἰώθασι μένειν τοὺς ἐπιόντας, and, lower down, προσβαλὼν τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις, πεφοβημένοις τε ἅμα τῇ σφετέρᾳ ἀταξίᾳ καὶ τὴν τόλμαν αὐτοῦ ἐκπεπληγμένοις. In what he said, Brasidas was evidently referring to familiar experiences of active service.

and to fall upon them and overwhelm them before their dispositions for battle could be completed, or even be fairly begun? Are we to think that the affair was but a huge preliminary jest—contrived, perhaps, by Alkibiades, true to his favourite role of irresponsible *farceur*?

We will venture yet a step farther in definition of the locality of the battle.

The defeat of Machanidas and the Lakedaimonians at the hands of Philopoimen and the Achaians, in 207 B.C., was largely due to the existence of a great trench, which extended right across the Mantineian plain, from the neighbourhood of the temple of Poseidon Hippios as far as the hills of the Elisphasioi.⁶ It is clear that the trench must have terminated near the foot-hills of Mainalos, on the western side of the plain. Some of the light troops of Philopoimen were posted on certain heights in front of Mantinea, commanding the temple and the road to Tegea. These heights are again those of Alesion lying to the north-east of that end of the trench.

The primary significance of this trench or dike was not military, but economic. It was designed to drain the lower portion of the Mantineian plain, and to carry the water to the katavothra of Milia.⁷ That the trench, of which we hear for the first and only time in connexion with the defeat and death of Machanidas, was already in existence at the date of the invasion by Agis, is more than upon the extant evidence may be positively asserted; but when account is taken of the legendary age of the similar works in other districts of Greece⁸ there is reasonable presumption, at all events, that

⁶ Pol. 11. 11: τὴν φάλαγγα κατὰ τέλη σπειρηδὸν ἐν διαστήμασιν ἐπέστησε παρὰ τὴν τάφρον, τὴν φέρουσαν ἐπὶ τοῦ Ποσειδίου διὰ μέσου τοῦ τῶν Μαντινέων πεδίου, καὶ συνάπτουσιν τοῖς ὄρεσι τοῖς συντερμονοῦσι τῇ τῶν Ἐλισφασίων χώρᾳ. The trench was about a mile south of the town, as is shown by Pol. 11. 14, where the Illyrians stationed at the eastern end of the trench flee προτροπάδην ὡς ἐπὶ τῆς Μαντινείας, ἀπεχούσης τῆς πόλεως ἑπτὰ σταδίου. It was both wide and deep (cp. Plut. Philop. 10. 362: τάφρου δὲ μεγάλης καὶ βαθείας ἐν μέσῳ λειργούσης), with sloping sides; but it was dry at the time of Philopoimen's battle, which was fought in early summer (Pol. 11. 15).

⁷ This is the one farthest south in the line of katavothras fringing this western edge of the plain. It seems more likely that the trench came down to this point, than that it ran to either of the more northerly katavothras, those of Μαζονεῖκᾶ and Γαντζούνα.

⁸ Perhaps the Great Trench in Messenia was a similar work (Paus. iv. 17. 2:

this Mantineian trench was of like immemorial antiquity. The two features characteristic of the system of mountain-enclosed plains constituting eastern Arkadia were, and are, the natural orifices of underground drainage, and the more or less artificial channels conducting the waters to them for engulphment. These, in some cases at least, were associated in legend with the name of Herakles—which means that their origin, so far as it had been due to human hands, had long been forgotten. The territory of Pheneos, for instance, possessed in addition to its katavothras a channel fifty stades in length, and thirty feet in depth, which carried off the waters of the river Olbios (Aroanios); this channel was popularly regarded as the handiwork of Herakles, just as were the katavothras themselves.⁹ From this point of view, the existence of a shrine of Herakles on, or close to, the Mantineian plain is of considerable significance. Did not this Herakleion of the Mantineians stand in close relation to the drainage channel of prehistoric origin cut across the plain to the katavothra? The Hero who had freed the cultivable ground of its imprisoned waters by cleaving a passage for them underground may well have been invoked to watch over the drainage-orifice upon which so much depended. The starting point of the channel was appropriately in the neighbourhood of a shrine of Poseidon, while its lower end was marked, we suggest, by this shrine of Herakles twice mentioned in the story of this campaign.

Assuming that the great trench was a permanent feature of the plain, and was in existence in 418 B.C., one might perhaps feel surprise that it should fail to be mentioned by Thucydides. It is to be observed, however, that neither in his description of the fight nor in his description of its preliminaries are any physical features of any kind whatsoever (μεγάλη τάφος). On Tegean territory we have a similar trench, I think, in the so-called Λαχᾶς ποταμός, at which the Lakedaimonians captured by the Tegeans were set to work (see Herod. 1. 66; Paus. viii. 47. 2; Herodian, 20. 13), in the first war with Tegea; this forced labour of the prisoners of war was perhaps connected with the control of the Sarandapotamos.

⁹ Paus. viii. 14. 1: ὕφ' ἑκατέρῳ δέ ἐστι τῷ ὄρει βάραθρον τὸ ὕδωρ καταδεχόμενον τὸ ἐκ τοῦ πεδίου. Τὰ δὲ βάραθρα οἱ Φενεᾶται ταῦτά φασιν εἶναι χειροποίητα, ποιῆσαι δ' αὐτὰ Ἡρακλέα . . . Διὰ μέσου δὲ ὥρυξεν Ἡρακλῆς τοῦ Φενεατῶν πεδίου (ἐλυτρον) ῥεῦμα εἶναι τῷ ποταμῷ τῷ Ὀλβίῳ.

in evidence as conditioning the movements of either army. The armies move apparently unhampered in any direction they please, and their disposition is depicted in a purely diagrammatic way, as though quite independent of spatial conditions and accidents of ground. Paper, it is true, can stand a great deal; but it would be highly irrational to imagine that the scene of action was, in point of fact, just such a *tabula rasa* as appears in the narrative of Thucydides. Both forest and trench, if then in existence—and the mere silence of Thucydides proves nothing the one way or the other—must have been prime elements of the terrain. In short, we have in them the regulative features of the battle-field. The Confederates took post in front of the trench; the Lakedaimonians deployed with their backs to the forest. The battle was fought in the mid-space; on this mid-space clear of obstacles Thucydides has fixed his eyes, regardless of all else. While thus delimiting the battle-field, neither forest nor trench had anything to say in the actual conflict; for the trench, probably all but dry, surely, in late August, can have constituted no very formidable impediment to the retreat of the discomfited Confederates, though possibly defining the limits of perfunctory pursuit of them by the Lakedaimonians. So far as concerns the actual course of the battle, then, Thucydides may in some sort claim indulgence for these his omissions; but for all that, his failure to notice the two main topographical features of the area of manoeuvre was due not to deliberate choice and conscious economy of narration, but solely to his possessing no eye for country, no instinct for the decisive elements of a terrain. Was it not precisely this defect, in the last analysis, that ruined his own military career, and cost Athens the brightest jewel of her empire?

CHAPTER VII

DEPLOYMENT OF THE ARMY OF KING AGIS

θαρρῶν γὰρ ἂν τις εἴποι, οὐχ ἡμισυ τὴν ἀρχὴν εἶναι τοῦ παντός, ἀλλὰ καὶ πρὸς τὸ τέλος διατείνειν. Πῶς γὰρ ἀρξασθαι τινος καλοῦ οἶόν τε μὴ προσεπιλαβόντα τῷ νῷ τὴν συντέλειαν τῆς ἐπιβολῆς, μηδὲ γινώσκοντα ποῦ καὶ πρὸς τί, καὶ τίνος χάριν ἐπιβάλλεται τοῦτο ποιεῖν;

POLYBIOS, 5. 32.

WHAT is the shortest time in which it can have been possible for the Lakedaimonian army of some twelve thousand men in column of route to deploy into line of battle? We must be done with the vaporous speculations inspired by the simple words of Thucydides here. "The excellence of the Lacedaemonian discipline, however," says Mitford,¹ "enabled the king to form his order of battle in a shorter time than would have been possible with any other troops then in the known world; and before the attack could be made they were prepared to receive it"—the marvel being here all the more striking because, according to Mitford himself, Agis had "suddenly met them advancing in order of battle along the plain"; while lower down we are told that the Confederates "had observed with joy the tumult occasioned by the first alarm." Similarly, Thirlwall² describes the affair: "Yet on this occasion, the excellence of their system of tactics, as it was brought to an unusual test, was the more signally displayed. The line of battle was quietly and rapidly formed—every man falling into his place with his wonted ease—before the enemy could take any advantage of their vicinity." In the same strain Grote:³ "All the various military manœuvres were familiar to the Lacedaemonians from their unremitting drill, so that their armies enjoyed the advantage of readier obedience along with more systematic command. Accordingly, though thus taken by surprise, and called on now for the first time in their lives to form in the presence of an enemy, they only manifested the greater promptitude and anxious haste in obeying the orders of Agis, transmitted

¹ *Hist.* 3. 255.

² *Hist.* 3. 348.

³ *Hist.* 6. 350.

through the regular series of officers. The battle array was attained, with regularity as well as with speed"—not, however, with absolute precision, as in Thirlwall's account; for, lower down, Grote tells us⁴ that "mutual suggestions were heard among them with a view to get their order of battle and position perfect—which at first it probably was not, from the sudden and hurried manner in which they had been constrained to form." The culmination of this climax of absurdities is reached by Fougères, who writes: "il fut tout surpris et effrayé de rencontrer l'ennemi au bas de la hauteur et étalant à peu de distance son front de bataille. Il ne lui restait qu'à passer rapidement de l'ordre de marche à la formation de combat, ce qui fut fait en quelques instants"—and this by the, for ancient Greece, colossal host that he imagines of 58,000 fighting men, of whom 17,000 were troops of the line.⁵

Attention has been so much distracted by this chorus of acclamation in honour of the alleged phenomenal rapidity of deployment, that two obvious, and indeed decisive, considerations have been altogether disregarded. In the first place, there marched with the Lakedaimonians three Arkadian contingents—those of the Heraians, the Mainalians, and the Tegeans—close on four thousand men, surely, or nearly one-third of the entire force; and these, for anything that appears to the contrary, deployed for action with the same celerity and the same precision as the Lakedaimonians themselves. What then of that boasted excellence of organization, discipline, and technical training, universally claimed for Lakedaimonian troops, and Lakedaimonian troops

⁴ *Hist.* 6. 353.

⁵ *Mantinee et l'Arcadie orientale*, p. 576. On p. 574 he says: "L'ensemble de l'armée d'Agis ne devait guère être inférieur à 58,000 combattants, dont environ 17,000 hoplites." On the same generous scale, Fougères estimates the army of the Confederates at 43,000 men. Fougères, however, simply took his figures (with one exception) from the worthless Dissertation of Ch. P. Metropulos: *Geschichtliche Untersuchungen über die Schlacht bei Mantinea*, Gött. 1858. The exception lies in the number of the Mantineians, which Metropulos puts at 7,000 (thus reaching a total of 46,100 men for the Confederates). Fougères (p. 569, note 6) considers this too high for Mantinea, and puts their strength at 3,000 men, but cannot add up his own figures correctly—making his total 43,000, instead of what it should be, namely 42,100. But who would take seriously the nonsensical methods and fantastic results of this Metropulos?

alone?⁶ Sauce for goose is sauce also for gander. In the second place, whence arose the necessity for that breathless haste which the paraphrasts of Thucydides delight to stress? Thucydides himself seems to know little enough about it. He tells us, quite simply, that the Lakedaimonians were more startled than they remembered ever to have been thus to find themselves called upon to form for action at short notice, that they could not afford to dilly-dally over their dispositions for immediate battle, and that they set about and carried out their deployment with rapidity and perfect smoothness. He neither asserts, nor is there any call for us to read into his words any suggestion, that the Lakedaimonians more than half expected to see the Confederates sweeping down upon them before their own phalanx could be ready to meet them midway in the onset. As a matter of fact, the narrative quite indisputably vouches for the very opposite of that. For after these moments of supposed feverish excitement and barely averted tragedy, all arrangements happily completed without a hitch, there ensued a not inconsiderable interval, filled, in both armies, by those exhortations and other emotional incitements that were, for Greek militia, a normal and necessary preliminary to action.⁷ No doubt we are entitled to imagine that much of all this latter business was already going on in the earliest adjusted portions of the line, the while that in other portions the final touches were still being put to the alignment; other units again being still engaged in actual process of deployment: so that the ensemble must have presented a lively scene of movement, of bodies of hoplites

⁶ The same remark holds good with respect to the feint upon Alesion; that is, if the entire Lakedaimonian army was employed in that demonstration. It is possible, however, that Agis there used only the centre and left of his order of battle. Still, Thucydides says simply οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι εὐθὺς αὐτοῖς ἐπῆσαν, from which we are within our rights in assuming, if we so please, that the Arkadian contingents also took their part in the demonstration. Certainly, no one would gather from Thucydides that a host of ten thousand men, more or fewer, had been engaged in the operation he describes so blithely. As for his modern commentators, most of them write as though Agis had been handling a few score, or at most a few hundred, men.

⁷ The apparent design of Epameinondas, to pitch camp on the western edge of the plain, close to the hills, according to Xen. *Hell.* vii. 5. 22: ἔλυσε μὲν τῶν πλείστων πολεμίων τὴν ἐν ταῖς ψυχαῖς πρὸς μάχην παρασκευήν, ἔλυσε δὲ τὴν ἐν ταῖς συντάξεσιν.

involved in the apparently inextricable maze of military evolution—to a layman so perplexing, so suggestive of pell-mell confusion and imminent inglorious collapse—and with all this, a medley of sound, of hoarse shouting of words of command, of high-pitched harangue, rumble of applause, and surge of patriotic song. The point on which insistence is to be laid, is that this medley of sound and motion would be quite wrongly interpreted as symptomatic of a desperate headlong haste of thoroughly scared men. The current idea, that the Lakedaimonians here staved off irremediable disaster only by a narrow margin, through a marvellous serenity and dear-bought perfection of drill and discipline,⁸ is but another form of that illegitimate transference of modern conceptions to ancient times, against which protest has already been lodged. It is at variance with the facts of normal Hellenic practice in pitched battles—as indeed is amply, though illogically, acknowledged by Grote,⁹ when he writes: “It

⁸ So *Cambr. Anc. Hist.* 5. 273, trying to have it both ways, writes: “For a moment the consternation in his ranks was as great as it was unusual; but the discipline of the Spartans soon asserted itself. The movement of the Lacedaemonians from column into line was completed in time despite the initial confusion; and when the other contingents had taken the posts assigned to them and the 400 horsemen had gained the flanks, Agis was ready for battle.” “For a moment”, quotha; and how much time is meant by that? And what were the Confederates about, during the interval before “Agis was ready for battle”? This, however, is beaten by Henderson (*The Great War between Athens and Sparta*, p. 325): “Never had a Spartan army been so aghast as now, stumbling thus straight upon the enemy. But no man lost his head. Every man knew his place and what to do. . . . The whole long column deployed with perfect precision into order of battle. Agis was ready before the commanders of the enemy’s composite forces had finished each making his usual fervid exhortation to his own troops and reminding them of ancient glories and present emergencies. The king himself had no time to address even a few brief words to his own men. But they exhorted themselves, says Thucydides, just ‘reminding one another of what their own brave spirits knew already’.” Were not the forces of Agis just as “composite” as those of the Confederates? And did Mainalians and Heraians know their drill every bit as thoroughly as brigades of Λακεδαιμόνιοι αὐτοί? What is the authority for the statement that Agis “had no time to address even a few brief words to his own men”?

⁹ Grote, *Hist.* 6. 352 f. Cp. his note (*Hist.* 6. 247) on Thuc. 5. 9 (speech of Brasidas at Amphipolis, immediately before the sortie): ἕως οὖν ἔτι ἀπαράσκευοι θαρσοῦσι . . . ἐν τῷ ἀνειμένῳ αὐτῶν τῆς γνώμης, καὶ πρὶν ξυνταχθῆναι μᾶλλον τὴν δόξαν—“The words τὸ ἀνειμένον τῆς γνώμης are full of significance in regard to ancient military affairs. The Grecian hoplites, even the best of them, required to be peculiarly *wound up* for a battle; hence the necessity of the

does not appear that the generals on the Argeian side made any attempt to charge while the Lacedaemonian battle-array was yet incomplete. It was necessary for them, according to Grecian practice, to wind up the courage of their troops by some words of exhortation and encouragement; and before these were finished, the Lacedaemonians may probably have attained their order." "May probably have attained their order"! If anything is certain, it is, not merely that the Lakedaimonians had attained their order before the Confederates advanced a single yard, but also that to forestall its attainment had never been within the remotest range of their adversaries' intentions. So far from the Lakedaimonians having been "called on now for the first time in their lives to form in the presence of an enemy", that was precisely what they, or any other Greek troops of the line of that day, were accustomed to do whenever and wherever they must fight a regular action.¹⁰ Nor was there, on the present occasion, any special call for break-neck speed of deployment, any question of a race against time. Quite gratuitous is it to cast about for some special explanation of the supposed failure of the Confederates to take advantage of the situation, idle to pretend to find it in an imputation of special ineptitude on their part, or what not. It lay in the nature of the particular type of fighting man, and the particular method of fighting in vogue at the time.

How Fougères would have proposed to handle his strange medley of 58,000 men is a problem upon which no light is shed by himself. The less outrageous estimates of others are equally irreconcilable with the feat of deployment with which their propounders are so eager to credit the army of Agis. Nor will any modesty in estimate avail to save the situation. If what is asserted is demonstrably beyond human power of accomplishment, the precise degree of its impracticability is really irrelevant. It is practically all one whether we are to

harangue from the general which always preceded." Grote then goes on to compare the passage of Xenophon's *Hell.* vii. 5. 22, quoted by me in a foregoing note.

¹⁰ Cp. the battle of Kunaxa, Xen. *Anab.* i. 8. 14: καὶ ἐν τούτῳ τῷ καιρῷ τὸ μὲν βαρβαρικὸν στράτευμα ὁμαλῶς προσήει, τὸ δ' Ἑλληνικὸν ἔτι ἐν τῷ αὐτῷ μένον συνετάττετο ἐκ τῶν ἔτι προσιόντων.

speak of 17,000 hoplites, or of 12,000, or whatever smaller and more manageable number might reasonably be suggested for the Lakedaimonian total. For consider—if we suppose the usual order of march to have been adopted on this occasion, so that the Lakedaimonians advanced in column of half-platoons, that is to say two abreast,¹¹ this must have meant, for an army of 12,000 hoplites, more than three miles and a half as the minimum length of the column. At that rate, the head of the column must have been about half-way to the Mytika gap before the rear ranks could stir from the outskirts of Tegea. If we assume that the army marched in column of half companies, i.e. on a front of two Enomotiai, each in ranks of four, it must still have extended over nearly a mile of ground—and that without any allowance for intervals between companies or battalions, or for the inevitable lengthening. A full half-mile is the least that, on any reasonable formation, the column must have covered, from front to rear. We return then to the question with which we started, and ask what is the shortest time in which a column of hoplites, within the limits of extension here given, could deploy for battle on a front approximately perpendicular to its line of march. Not, we may be sure, the *quelques instants* of Fougères—neither that nor anything like it.

Unquestionably, provision for rapid and orderly deployment must have been made at the time the men fell in for march that morning.¹² If we hit the truth in our contention

¹¹ Cp. Xen. *Hell.* vii. 4. 22: ἐβόηθει δὴ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Ἀρχίδαμος, ἐκτραπόμενος κατὰ τὴν ἐπὶ Κρῶμνον φέρουσαν ἀμαξιτόν, εἰς δύο ἄγων, ὥσπερ ἐτύγγαεν ἔχων. And that was in the immediate neighbourhood of the enemy. When contact was made, the troops of Archidamos were κατὰ κέρας, ἅτε καθ' ὁδὸν πορευόμενοι; while their opponents, the Arkadians, were ἀθρόοι συνασπιλοῦντες, i.e. in phalanx. See also Xen. *Hell.* iii. 1. 22.

¹² Claus. 1. 89: "The particular order of march is in constant relation with readiness for combat, is therefore tactical in its nature, for it is nothing more than the first or preliminary disposition for the battle which may possibly take place."

Cp. the procedure of Epameinondas, in Xen. *Hell.* vii. 5. 21: πρῶτον μὲν γάρ, ὥσπερ εἰκός, συνετάττετο. τοῦτο δὲ πράττων σαφηνίζειν ἐδόκει, ὅτι εἰς μάχην παρεσκευάζετο· ἐπεὶ γε μὴν ἐτέτακτο αὐτῷ τὸ στράτευμα ὡς ἐβούλετο—he marched slowly across the plain in a north-westerly direction, i.e. towards a point, probably, marked by the hill now called Merkovuni, north of Tripolitsa. Eventually he formed front to his right flank, approximately parallel to his line of march. The order of units in his column of route must have been the same as their order in the line deployed in retiring echelon from the left.

that Agis expected to find the enemy in position across his line of advance, all the more inevitably must we also credit him with having made some special dispositions for eventual deployment—some arrangements, that is to say, over and above the customary arrangements presupposed in the mere evolution of a line of battle out of a marching column. The movements of units at the critical moment were, we are assured, orderly and purposeful—not simply in the sense that they were carried out without a hitch on the lines prescribed by the familiar and more or less automatic evolutions of the drill-ground, but in the sense that their final result, as exhibited in the structure of the completed phalanx, was something more than the fortuitous outcome of an unforeseen emergency successfully met. The battle-order described by Thucydides was a battle-order that, in its main features, at any rate, and probably also in its details, had been pre-determined by Agis himself, and pre-determined strictly in reference to the tactical scheme that from the first had been in his mind. Whatever may have been the formation in which his army marched to the field of battle, the place held in that formation by each and every unit had been conditioned by the destined role of that unit—that is to say, by the king's mental picture of his battalions as eventually deployed for action.

This mental picture of the battle-order was itself the product of two or three factors in chief—the general conception or tactical scheme of the coming battle, as planned by the king; the accurately gauged comparative excellencies and aptitudes of the various components of his own army; not least also the enemy's dispositions, so far as these were definitely ascertained, or were reasonably to be prognosticated. In respect of this last factor, room is to be left for the working of various traditional principles and notorious rules or usages; such as that which, in Lakedaimonian armies, assigned the left wing invariably to the Skirites. The station of the Mantineians, on the right wing of the Confederate army, was given as a matter of course by the consideration that the battle was to be fought on their own soil.¹³ The

¹³ Cp. the battle of 243 B.C., described in Paus. viii. 10. 5, in which the

dispositions of the Confederates as already exhibited on the Alesion ridge must also have been worth something as an indication of their probable future order of battle in the plain. A wide field is open here for reasonable conjecture by way of supplement. There is little difficulty in imagining that the available evidence, of one sort and another, must have been sufficient to enable Agis to prognosticate that, let us say, the Argeian battalions would be massed in the enemy's centre. The difficulty is greater when, coming down to details, we ask whether the evidence would allow him to say confidently what part of their line a comparatively small body like the Argeian select corps would hold—whether the right centre of the Confederate line, or the left centre. Something, of course, must be reserved for swift and accurate discernment on the part of Agis and his brigadiers in the immediate presence of the enemy. As already pointed out, the time available for deployment, though doubtless not extravagantly ample, was yet demonstrably adequate for what had to be done, in accordance with normal procedure on such occasions. Whatever the exact degree of his foreknowledge of the enemy's dispositions, the essential requirement for Agis was so to dispose the units of his own column as at the proper moment to permit of their frictionless and purposeful handling, in order to bring them to the exact position postulated by their destined role in the battle. There is no room here for rule of thumb or haphazard; not very much room for mere habit and unreflecting instinct. Such habit and second nature find their proper sphere in the primary groups and the individuals composing them, not in the larger masses whose arrangement in the battle-line is here in question.

In point of fact, analysis of the Lakedaimonian order of battle reveals decisive evidence of careful design in the place appointed for the several corps. Over against the formidable mass of the Mantineians and their allies, and the select Argeian corps, are ranged Skirites and Helots—troops of the first quality, professionally regarded, but of small account

Mantineians held the right wing, the battle being on their territory; and in that of 362 B.C., according to Diod. 15. 85, for the same reason the Mantineians were on the right wing.

socially and politically. At the other extremity of the line, the men of Tegea, who as being the staunch guardians of that northern outpost of Lakedaimon were not to be taken in toll too heavily, are so placed as to range far beyond the Athenians; the weight of the Athenian onset must fall, therefore, upon the Heraians and the Mainalians, and indeed chiefly upon the latter—these highlanders again clearly an element of inferior account, as compared with Heraians, the bulwark of the central valley of the Alpheios against Elis. The precious core of Lakedaimonian battalions, together with the Royal Guard, the very pick of the finest infantry in Greece, is confronted by no opponents more formidable than the raw militia of Argos, hardly a man of which had ever in his life stood in phalanx on the embattled field before this day.¹⁴ Was all this purely accidental—a piece of sheer good luck that enabled a silly king to reap where he had not sown? Some one in the Lakedaimonian army must have kept his wits about him to good purpose, one thinks, in the midst of the alleged universal blank consternation. According to Thucydides—the admission, it is true, hardly squaring with the discernable drift of his own narrative—this had been none other than king Agis himself.¹⁵ And that is manifestly neither more nor less than the truth. Agis, however, whose head was a good deal steadier, and his brain far cooler, than Thucydides ever dreamt, relied neither on the chances of accident nor on the inspiration of the moment, but on his own foresight and forethought, backed by the discipline and manœuvring power of his troops. Hence his line of battle exhibits in effect a bi-partition of his forces; his left and centre being composed of the most highly trained, most experienced, and most trustworthy battalions—battalions that were, in one sense or another, Lakedaimonian—while his right was held by Arkadian levies, which upon the whole were less highly trained, less experienced, and at a pinch less trustworthy, than Lakedaimonian troops. Moreover, by way

¹⁴ The militia of Argos had seen no fighting since about 463 B.C. A very large proportion of the men must have gone into action for the first time in their life this day.

¹⁵ Thuc. 5. 66: καθίσταντο ἐς κόσμον τὸν ἑαυτῶν, Ἄγιλος τοῦ βασιλέως ἕκαστα ἐξηγουμένου κατὰ τὸν νόμον.

of reducing to absolute minimum the chance of disaster, these relatively inferior infantry of the right are extended far beyond the hostile wing, so that when they duly wheel inwards upon its flank they will effectually check or brake its momentum. All this surely implies careful and minute prevision, with the object of ensuring that the operation of deployment should be carried out accurately and smoothly in accordance with a definite and clearly conceived programme. Very different this from the current view, in which instinctive discipline and a sort of second nature of the rank and file are invoked to do duty for the intelligence and foresight of their commander-in-chief.

These dispositions, in themselves, would naturally go far to promote rapidity and certainty of deployment. Nevertheless, the stubborn facts of numbers, space, and time—the ultimate elements of the problem—impose here a limit of possibility a long way this side of the phenomenal achievement with which the Lakedaimonians—and, be it remembered, their allies also—are to be credited, on the current view. Exactly how long the deployment must have taken to carry to completion, is really neither here nor there—given that it is once correctly apprehended as an operation that must have consumed a good deal of time; and further, that here all was effected in quite normal fashion, even down to the “few stirring words” and the battle hymns that, on the respective sides, carried off the last nerve-racking minutes—that bad quarter of an hour during which two embattled hosts would be staring at each other across the mid-space, waiting for the signal that should heave them forward to lock and sway in panting murderous conflict.¹⁶

¹⁶ J. Kromayer, in his *Antike Schlachtfelder*, vol. iv. 2, 1926, p. 213, arguing against my article (*Annual of the British School at Athens*, vol. 22, pp. 51–84), puts forward two assumptions—(1) for the Lakedaimonian army (which he persists in calling “das spartanische Heer”) a total of at most 8,000 to 9,000 men; (2) a marching column of eight men (i.e. two Enomotiai) abreast. Hence he gets a column of route of 1,000 to 1,100 men deep, i.e. in length; and with a sort of naïve surprise points out that the depth of this column of route is exactly equal to the frontage extension of the army deployed in phalanx. Consequently, when the marching column, as it drew clear of the Pelagos wood, sighted the enemy on its right front—“so macht einfach . . . jede Doppelenomotie, da wir nur diese Kolonnenbreite angenommen haben, eine Viertelschwenkung

nach rechts, und die Schlachtfront ist hergestellt. Das ist ein Manöver von wenigen Minuten." And if the column marched on a front of more than eight, the deployment into phalanx, Kromayer points out, would be "noch weniger zeitraubend." It should seem, then, that Fougères was after all not so very far out with his *quelques instants*. Fougères was manoeuvring his troops on paper, where everything goes quite smoothly; but Kromayer must have known that in the field things are very different, and that a Greek phalanx could not be evolved from column of half-companies in the slapdash presto fashion he pretends to describe. That he has himself some misgiving about it, may be inferred from the fact that he goes on to suggest that the reason why the Confederates did not launch an attack upon the Lakedaimonians at sight, was because they were themselves taken by surprise by the reappearance of Agis and his army, being actually caught in a sort of experimental deploy, or trial phalanx (p. 216: "Sie beabsichtigten also, von ihrem Lager aus vorzumarschieren, um den Feind aufzusuchen, natürlich in Marschformation, und hatten hier vor ihrem Lager nur eine Probeaufstellung für den Ernstfall gemacht"). Fortunate indeed for the Confederates that they had gone about their experiment betimes that morning; else perhaps they might even have been caught literally napping. But why has Thucydides apparently no inkling of the Confederates' surprisal, though so explicit about that of the Lakedaimonians? After this his amendment of the account, it is scarcely surprising to find Kromayer blandly proposing summarily to dismiss the speechifying in the ranks of the Confederates, to which Thucydides bears specific witness (p. 216: "Die noch vor dem Zusammenprall angeblich gehaltenen Reden werden wir wohl als rhetorische Schmuckstücke auf sich beruhen lassen können"). The culmination of Kromayer's critical effort is reached when, wishing to confute the evidence adduced by me, of design in the disposition of the elements of the phalanx as evolved from the column of route, he points out that the phalanx was "nichts anderes als die in die Frontstellung umgesetzte Marschordnung." Quite so. But who was responsible for the "Marschordnung" in the first place, and for the actual sequence of its components? And on what principle had they been arranged precisely as they were? It is strange that so much trouble should be taken, in the vain endeavour to prove that Agis was a person of little or no intelligence. The object, it should seem, is at all costs to save the credit of Thucydides. See a Review of Kromayer's *Antike Schlachtfelder* (vol. 4), by A. von Premerstein, in *Historische Zeitschrift*, vol. 142, 1 (1930), pp. 97-100—"So ergibt sich für Delion, Amphipolis und die erste Schlacht bei Mantinea (418), im letzten Fall gegen die Bemängelungen des Engländers Woodhouse, die unbedingte Zuverlässigkeit der Angaben des Thukydides." That is to be *plus royaliste que le roi*; for even Kromayer is willing to acknowledge that the account of Thucydides is defective.

CHAPTER VIII

THE BATTLE OF MANTINEIA

“There is then nothing in War which can be put in comparison with the great battle in point of importance, and the acme of strategic ability is displayed in the provision of means for this great event, in the skilful determination of place and time, and direction of troops, and in the good use made of success. But it does not follow from the importance of these things that they must be of a very complicated and recondite nature; all is here rather simple, the art of combination by no means great; but there is great need of quickness in judging of circumstances, need of energy, steady resolution, a youthful spirit of enterprise—heroic qualities . . .”

CARL VON CLAUSEWITZ, *On War* (translated by J. J. GORDON, vol. 1, p. 291).

HAVING described with admirable fullness and clearness the order in which the several corps on either side were marshalled in the phalanx, Thucydides proceeds to explain with great nicety a certain general characteristic of the advance in line of a body of Greek hoplites, and to relate the effect of this in the present instance. The gist of the matter is, that, as a rule, Greek infantry charging in line would not advance in a direction perpendicular to their base of departure, but persisted in bearing away continually towards their right. Since both armies did this, the result was that by the time contact was achieved by the colliding lines the right wing of either army found itself overlapping the left wing of the opposing phalanx, to a greater or less extent.

This famous passage, in which Thucydides professes to give a glimpse into the working of the mind of the Greek hoplite going into action, has furnished the text of a very tradition of false exegesis. The misconceptions that have gathered about it have their origin, it must be confessed, with Thucydides himself. They spring directly from his desire to find a purely psychological explanation of the phenomenon, whereas the true explanation lies in a different direction. We cannot follow him in deducing the obliquity of the advance of a hoplite mass from a dominant impulse in each man to

seek the protection of the shield of his right-hand comrade. Such impulse, if really existent and operative to the degree claimed for it,¹ plainly cannot have worked with the same intensity in each man, but with every gradation of effect throughout the phalanx, until, growing by what it fed on, and as it were by reciprocal contagion, it must soon have bid fair to burst the bonds of discipline and bring about the disruption of the whole array. Originating confessedly in fear, it could end at best only in a courage of sheer despair. For, after all, the two lines—each composed *ex hypothesi* of individuals under the same overmastering impulse of fear—must eventually close in combat, and their sidelong deviation be rudely and effectually checked at last by mutual impact. Is it thus that we are to picture the men that on the blood-soaked slopes of Delion, of Koroneia, of Leuktra, and many another stubbornly contested field, stood up to the flickering play of stabbing pikes, and the steady thrust of shield against shield?

The true cause of the deflexion lay, not as Thucydides explains, in fear, but in the simple fact that each man in the line carried a heavy and cumbrous shield. The shield entirely covered the hoplite's left arm and side, but only partially covered the front of his body. The natural tendency, and proper procedure, of the hoplite marching forward to engage was to advance, not squarely to his front, but at an angle; partly because he must needs keep his shield, rather than his own body, squarely confronting the oncoming enemy, and partly also because the great shield itself impeded direct forward motion. The stride was to be made, with most convenience, not directly towards the shield, but, as it were, parallel to it. Further, this obliquity of presentation, or inclination to the right, put the individual hoplite into exactly the correct position for immediate effective application of his weight at the moment of impact. For a conflict

¹ Thucydides makes it universal—5. 71: διὰ τὸ φοβουμένους προστέλλειν ἕκαστον . . . ἔπονται δὲ διὰ τὸν αὐτὸν φόβον καὶ οἱ ἄλλοι. It is idle to try to water down this reiterated φόβος to something innocuous, as is done e.g. in Grote's account (6. 354); where it is described only as a "natural tendency . . . in order to avoid exposing their own unshielded side; while for the same reason every man along the line took care to keep close to the shield of his right hand neighbour"—and not a syllable betrays the φόβος of the original.

of hoplites was, in the main, a matter of brawn, of shock of the mass developed instantaneously as a steady thrust with the whole weight of the file behind it—a literal shoving of the enemy off the ground on which he stood.² The notion that each man in the line was bent on getting under cover of the shield of his fellow on the right, is, to put it bluntly, nothing but a fatuous delusion and stark nonsense.

Now be the truth as it may in the case of other Hellenic armies of this period, in that of a Lakedaimonian army, at all events, with its higher standard of drill, more developed and flexible articulation, more instinctive discipline, the above-described obliquity of advance on the part of the charging phalanx was completely under the control of its commander-in-chief. Since it was the natural and calculable effect of a purely physical cause fully understood and perfectly familiar in its practical working on the drill-ground, it was amenable to official control to a degree quite out of the question in dealing with a movement originating from a mere instinct of self-preservation or fear, such as Thucydides postulates. Is proof of that demanded? Proof is found—and where better?—in the very narrative, nay in the very Chapter, now before us. Outstanding in this narrative is its explicit testimony that Agis controlled so absolutely the movements of his left wing, that, although it was already advancing to the assault, already committed to the diagonal of direction set for the entire line by the file-leader of the right wing—who is expressly named as responsible for the deflexion of the phalanx as a whole—his orders effected an immediate change of direction or angle of advance; with the result that the units of the left began at once, as he desired, to take ground towards their own shield-arm, away from the centre—the battalions of the centre and right meanwhile continuing to press forward in the direction indicated for them at the outset, sheering off towards the spear-arm, ever farther away

² Cp. the fighting at Delion, Thuc. 4. 96: τὸ δὲ ἄλλο καρτερᾷ μάχῃ καὶ ὠθισμῷ ἀσπίδων ξυνεστήκει . . . τὸ δὲ δεξιόν, ἧ οἱ Θηβαῖοι ἦσαν, ἐκράτει τῶν Ἀθηναίων καὶ ὠσάμενοι κατὰ βραχὺ τὸ πρῶτον ἐπηκολούθουν. And in the battle at the Olympicion, Thuc. 6. 70: ὠσαμένων δὲ τῶν Ἀργείων πρῶτον τὸ εὐώνυμον κέρας τῶν Συρακοσίων καὶ μετ' αὐτοὺς τῶν Ἀθηναίων τὸ κατὰ σφᾶς αὐτοὺς, παρερρήγνυτο ἤδη καὶ τὸ ἄλλο στράτευμα τῶν Συρακοσίων καὶ ἐς φυγὴν κατέστη.

from their comrades of the left wing. If one thing emerges from the account more clearly than another, it is the implication that Agis entertained not the shadow of a doubt on the score of his own power to direct, up to the very last moment before contact, the advance of any portion of his line upon any desired objective. Whether he over-rated the tactical flexibility of his troops is beside the question; he must indubitably have had definite facts of normal experience to go upon in his expectations and his demands upon his men. Given that his orders were obeyed, the only factor eluding his control was that of time. The onset once begun, it was always possible that the opposing masses should crash together in the shock of battle before the desired manœuvre could be carried to completion. Yet even in the heat and stress of combat the Lakedaimonian phalanx never got out of hand, but to the end remained still the flexible and responsive instrument of its commander-in-chief.

The picture drawn by Thucydides is wholly different from this. He depicts the entire situation as one over which Agis exercised no genuine control—nay, as one that he failed even to apprehend until it was altogether too late to apply a remedy. The oblique advance towards the right on the part of the phalanx is represented as a deflexion virtually beyond the control of any external authority whatsoever. When, all too late, there flashed upon the king's ill-balanced brain the idea of counteracting the tendency of the men to edge away towards the spear-arm, he had no other resource than, *more suo*, attempting to cure ill by means of ill, to adopt the most clumsy and perilous of expedients—the crude and ill-timed experiment of actually breaking off a portion of his advancing line, and marching troops from the other wing to fill the gap; which brilliant scheme was frustrated, partly by the flat insubordination of two of his brigadiers, partly by the Confederates' utter lack of consideration in not withholding their own headlong and furious charge until the king's counter-measures should be completed. So much for Spartan acumen and the vaunted Lakedaimonian discipline and tactical efficiency. Yet the narrative of this sorry collapse, by strange and obvious self-contradiction, definitely attests

the most absolute control of direction of the Lakedaimonian phalanx on the part of its commander-in-chief; and no less definitely and unambiguously carries the implication of his unhesitating reliance upon the ability of his subordinates and their commands to perform the desired evolution in the very face of the advancing enemy, with entire success.

The right wing of the Mantineians enveloped the Lakedaimonian left wing, consisting of Skirites, Veterans of Brasidas, and Neodamodes, while the main body of the Mantineians, and their Arkadian allies, held it fast in front; simultaneously, the Thousand picked Argeians dashing into the gap in the Lakedaimonian phalanx completed the isolation and discomfiture of the sundered wing. Whilst this was happening on the left, the Lakedaimonian centre, where the king himself was posted with his three hundred Guards, fell upon the Five Battalions constituting the main body of the Argeians, and almost by the mere moral effect of their onset turned them speedily into a rabble flying pell-mell over the plain. From all this, it seems clear that Agis and the Lakedaimonian centre had as their immediate opponents practically none but the troops of the Argeian general levy, on the left of the select corps. This corps itself, at the moment of contact of the two lines, had actually no enemy units at all on its front, but was able unchecked to hurl itself straight into the gap in the Lakedaimonian line.

In the realization of this fact, that the gap in the Lakedaimonian phalanx was opened directly in face of the Argeian select corps, we hold the key to the tactics of Agis. His design was to tempt that corps to take advantage of the gap—to its own undoing. For the inevitable upshot would be, that the enemy's line would be fatally severed, torn asunder as it were by its own momentum. If the Confederates fell into the trap thus set for them, the Argeian select corps and the Mantineian militia—the two most efficient elements of their entire array—would lose touch with the Argeian battalions of the centre, and the whole Confederate line would be in danger of piecemeal destruction. Moreover, the blow struck by the select corps would fall almost harmlessly in the air. The dreadful momentum of its charge would be reduced,

would sink indeed almost to zero as the files swung round to the right in order to close upon the rear and flank of the doomed Helots. This was precisely what happened. That it did so happen, was the clearly foreseen and nicely calculated issue of tactics not in the least comprehended by Thucydides, and consequently only imperfectly described by him.

True, Agis, in a very literal sense, was playing with edge-tools. The prime essential to appreciation of his tactics is to observe at what point exactly the break in the continuity of the Lakedaimonian line was contrived. The break fell just between the left centre and the Neodamodes; the latter, in conjunction with the Veterans of Brasidas brigaded with them, thus constituting the inner flank of the detached wing. The Lakedaimonian brigades of the centre, having their left or shield side towards the Argeian Thousand when these penetrated the gap, were reasonably safeguarded on that flank. The Veterans of Brasidas and the Neodamodes, on the other side of the gap, found their own unshielded right flank laid open without remedy to the onslaught of the Argeians bursting into the interval. The Lakedaimonian left wing, enveloped as it was on either flank, was thus bound to lose heavily; but Agis knew just as well as another that omelets are not to be had without breaking eggs. Those at any rate that without misgiving accept from Thucydides the tale of the mysterious fate of the two thousand Helots emancipated for their loyalty and bravery in the field—only presently to be made away with by the Spartan secret service³—can hardly raise objection upon the supposition that the success of Agis at Mantinea will have been criticized in Sparta as too dearly bought by the partial sacrifice of this single Helot brigade. Was not Sparta notoriously prodigal⁴ of the blood of her Skirites? We may be sure that she did not rate her Helot hoplites anything like as highly as she rated those fine Highlanders.

The daring tactics of the Spartan king, grazing the very

³ Thuc. 4. 80: on which see the shocked comments of Grote, 6. 146, and Thirlwall 1. 312. Even the *Cambr. Anc. Hist.* twice repeats the foolish story (5. 7 and 243).

⁴ Xen. *Kyrōph.* iv. 2. 1: Διὸ ἐχρῶντο αὐτοῖς οἱ Ἀσσύριοι ὥσπερ καὶ οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι τοῖς Σκιρίταις, οὐδὲν φειδόμενοι αὐτῶν οὔτ' ἐν πόνοις οὔτ' ἐν κινδύνοις.

edge of disaster, had the merit of embracing several ends. For besides partially neutralizing the deadly shock of the Argeian select corps, they laid their account with another element in the situation—an element of political rather than of military import. Recruited from the wealthier families of Argos, the men in the ranks of the Thousand were, to say the least, no convinced democrats; so that it is not surprising to find them, only six months later, intriguing with the Spartans for the subversion of the discredited Argeian democracy.⁵ It was undoubtedly to Sparta's interest—and just as confidently may we say that she must have been alive to it—that this aristocratic corps should be handled as gently as might be; not so much because the Thousand were specially formidable in a military sense, though certainly by no means to be underrated on that score, even by Lakedaimonians, as because of their prospective value in connexion with the negotiations and intrigues through which in any case the chief fruits of victory on the battle-field were eventually to be garnered.⁶ Thucydides himself incidentally preserves slight but sufficient indication that in point of fact the treatment of the Argeian Thousand by the victors was very different from that meted out to the rest of the Confederates. We are as good as told in so many words, that in the debacle the Argeian select corps was dealt with tenderly, whereas the Mantineians having sown the wind were compelled to reap the whirlwind. Diodoros also has preserved a morsel of evidence to the same effect,⁷ in his account of the advice

⁵ Cp. Arist. *Pol.* vii (v), 4. 9 = 1304 a: καὶ ἐν Ἀργεὶ οἱ γνώριμοι εὐλοκήσαντες περὶ τὴν ἐν Μαντινείᾳ μάχην τὴν πρὸς Λακεδαιμονίους ἐπεχείρησαν καταλύειν τὸν Δῆμον. See also Diod. 12. 80.

⁶ Cp. Claus. 1. 31: "If we attack the enemy's Army, it is a very different thing whether we intend to follow up the first blow with a succession of others, until the whole force is destroyed, or whether we mean to content ourselves with a victory to shake the enemy's feeling of security, to convince him of our superiority, and to instil into him a feeling of apprehension about the future. If this is our object, we only go so far in the destruction of his forces as is sufficient."

The explanation given in the text is of course not meant to exclude the operation of the principle laid down in Paus. iv. 8. 11: ἦν δὲ αὐτοῖς καὶ ἄλλως πάτριον σχολαιτέρας τὰς διώξεις ποιεῖσθαι, μὴ διαλύσαι τὴν τάξιν πλείονα ἔχοντες πρόνοιαν ἢ τινα ἀποκτεῖναι φεύγοντα.

⁷ Diod. 12. 79: Φάραξ γὰρ ὁ Σπαρτιάτης, εἰς ὧν τῶν συμβούλων, ἀξίωμα δὲ μέγιστον

proffered to Agis by a certain Pharax, a Spartan of the king's War Council—not to drive the vanquished Argeians to desperation, but to open for them a way of honourable withdrawal from the field. The tradition, we see, is clear and positive upon two points: that the losses of the Argeian select corps were comparatively light, and that this was due to self-restraint on the part of the Lakedaimonians in the hour of victory. It is, of course, open to any one to argue that the Thousand really owed their survival solely to their own gallantry and the dauntless steadiness with which they bore themselves that black day. That view would not easily square with the impression recorded to have been produced in Greece at large by the Lakedaimonian victory; though it may be granted readily enough that the story of the performance of the crack corps lost nothing in the telling at Argos.

It is very noteworthy that the tradition of this campaign should be found to have preserved two several instances of interjectional advice tendered to this apparently most fatuous of commanders; who, to give him his due, accepts the admonition of his seniors with a most exemplary docility. In both cases the truth is that we have to do with carefully prepared impromptu. We must by no means lose sight of the fact that, to the bulk of his own army, Agis was a man under a cloud, strongly suspected of incompetence, not to say downright treason. After the lamentable fiasco, or what had looked like fiasco, for which he had been responsible a few weeks previously in Argolis, a regulation without precedent in Spartan history, says Thucydides, had been adopted, which set by his side a Council of War. Repeatedly in the course of this Mantineian campaign do we find the king making large and unusual demands upon the efficiency and morale of his troops. Obedience to orders that strained almost to breaking-point both technical skill and habits of discipline could be secured, with least likelihood of fatal hitch, by contriving that they should appear to emanate from some authority

ἔχων ἐν τῇ Σπάρτῃ, διακελεύετο τοῖς λογάσι δοῦναι δίοδον, καὶ μὴ πρὸς ἀπεγνωκότας τὸ ζῆν διακινδυνεύοντας πείραν λαβεῖν ἀτυχούσης ἀρετῆς. Ὅθεν ἠναγκάσθη κατὰ τὴν ἀρτίως ῥηθεῖσαν ἐπιταγὴν δοῦναι διέξοδον κατὰ τὴν τοῦ Φάρακος γνώμην. Οἱ μὲν οὖν χίλιοι τὸν εἰρημένον τρόπον ἀφέντες διελθεῖν δισώθησαν.

paramount to that of the suspected king—from that Council of War which, as every one knew, had been charged with the express duty of controlling his vagaries. This whole business of interposition on the part of sagacious seniors was adroitly pre-arranged for the special benefit of the rank and file of the Lakedaimonian army itself.⁸

⁸ For a similar incident, see Xen. *Hell.* vii. 4. 25: at Kromnos, in 365 B.C., the Lakedaimonians were repulsed by the Arkadians, and having retired a little distance prepared to renew the combat—ὥς δὲ πλησίον ὄντων ἀναβοήσας τις τῶν πρεσβυτέρων εἶπε· Τί δεῖ ἡμᾶς, ὦ ἄνδρες, μάχεσθαι, ἀλλ' οὐ σπείσασμένους διαλυθῆναι; ἄσμενοι δὲ ἁμφοτέροι ἀκούσαντες ἐσπείσαντο. καὶ οἱ μὲν Λακεδαιμόνιοι τοὺς νεκροὺς ἀνελόμενοι ἀπῆλθον. King Archidamos had been wounded in the first brush, and was perhaps quite incapacitated. Xenophon, we may be sure, has no intention here of representing the Lakedaimonians as a mob swayed by any sort of irresponsible suggestion, whether from the lips of a πρεσβύτερος or any other. The simplicity of the language, in fact, disguises the official character of the action.

For analogous playing upon the susceptibilities of the common soldier, cp. Polyæn. i. 41: Ἀρχίδαμος ἐν Ἀρκαδίᾳ μέλλων παρατάσσεσθαι τῇ ὑστεραίᾳ ἐπέρρωσε τοὺς Σπαρτιάτας διὰ νυκτὸς βωμὸν ἱδρυσάμενος καὶ κοσμήσας ὅπλοις λαμπροτάτοις καὶ ἵππους δύο περιαγαγών. ἐπεὶ δὲ ἦν ἕως, οἱ λοχαγοὶ καὶ οἱ ταξίαρχοι καινὰ ὅπλα καὶ δύο ἵπποι ἰχνη καὶ βωμὸν αὐτόματον ἰδόντες διήγγειλαν, ὥς οἱ Διόσκουροι συμμαχήσοντες ἦκοιεν. οἱ στρατιῶται θαυρήσαντες καὶ τὰς γνώμας ἐνθεοὶ γένόμενοι γενναίως ἡγωνίσαντο καὶ τοὺς Ἀρκάδας ἐνίκησαν. The ordinary Spartan hoplite must have been a man of rare simplicity (τὸ εὐθές, οὗ τὸ γενναῖον πλεῖστον μετέχει—Thuc. 3. 83).

CHAPTER IX

THE ROLE OF THE TWO POLEMARCHS

εἶη μὲν οὖν ἡμῖν ἐκκαθαίρομενον λόγῳ τὸ μυθῶδες ὑπακούσαι καὶ λαβεῖν ἱστορίας ὄψιν. PLUTARCH, *Theseus*, 1.

WHAT exactly was the role assigned to the Polemarchs Aristokles and Hipponoidas in this drama of battle? As reported, their instructions were that they must bring up two battalions from the right, in order to fill a vacancy arising in the left section of the line. We are certainly not to imagine that their insubordination exhibited itself in dilatoriness in the transmission of these instructions to some other officers whose immediate duty it was to carry them into effect, or that possibly they flatly refused to convey such instructions to those officers. It is clear that Aristokles and Hipponoidas, and none other, were personally in command of the two battalions that were to be transferred, personally responsible for the execution of the tactical manoeuvre called for by their commander-in-chief. Their misconduct led to their banishment, either as a specific penalty laid on them by the state, or self-inflicted to avoid worse. The charge against them, on which they were condemned, was, according to Thucydides, that of cowardice in the face of the enemy. We must understand this expression in a technical sense, as covering for a Spartiate all and any breaches of military duty and honour. That the two Polemarchs had been false to duty through sheer failure of nerve in a situation that had been too much for them, is scarcely to be put forward as a serious hypothesis.

Now, as a matter of fact and common sense, what was demanded of these two officers was a physical impossibility—given that Thucydides has correctly reported the tenor of their instructions. It was absolutely out of all question for them to reach the gap in the line with their battalions before it could be penetrated by the Argeian select corps. Nothing can alter that simple and indisputable fact; nor should any cloud of words be allowed to obscure it.¹ On the other hand,

unless we are to assume that the verdict brought in against the Polemarchs was altogether unreasonable and prejudiced, the transference ordered by Agis cannot have been a demonstrable absurdity. The orders issued by him must have kept within the limits of what was practicable; they cannot have been determined by what was merely desirable, irrespective of its practicability. The king must have been in a position to prove a good deal more than the bare fact that his repeated orders had been set at defiance by the two Polemarchs. He must have been able to demonstrate that the specified manœuvre was feasible, not simply in and for itself as a military evolution of the drill-ground, but under the strenuous conditions of action, and in the particular circumstances of this action; that it was reasonable and expedient; and that refusal to carry it out had entailed loss, had even exposed the entire army to grave risk of disaster. Each and all of these points could be established beyond dispute before any competent tribunal, and apparently were so established to the satisfaction of the Spartan authorities.

Equally beyond dispute is it, that if the king's orders had in view nothing but the transference of two battalions from the right to the vacant space on the left, more especially if such transference was to be made from the extremity of the wing, their performance was a sheer impossibility, under the conditions described. For the onset of the Lakedaimonians might be as deliberate and orderly as they themselves had a mind to make it, but they could not lay down the law for the Confederates; who, as a matter of fact, charged with conspicuous ardour, so that the few hundred yards of ground originally separating the two armies must have been covered in a time to be measured not in minutes, but in seconds. In the very crisis and article of the charge, to transfer from the right of the advancing phalanx to the left some two thousand heavy-armed men, moving them with formation unbroken over several hundred yards of ground, behind and across the rear of a considerable portion of the army, which in the

¹ Claus. 1. 143: "When once the thing is traced back to a simple truth, controversy must cease, or at all events a new result is obtained."

meantime continued its own steady onward march—how could that be within the bounds of human accomplishment? Yet, upon the face of the account, these two battalions were set the task, not only of forestalling the enemy at the threatened point, but of filling the vacancy exactly, and restoring the alignment and cohesion of the phalanx—all within the last few moments preceding actual collision of the two lines. What miracle of manœuvring! Well might the two unfortunate Polemarchs stand aghast at this staggering demand. The orders of Agis, couched in this form—and this and none other, be it remembered, is the form in which, under the voucher of Thucydides, they have actually descended to us—must have seemed but the wild freak of a lunatic.²

In reality, given Lakedaimonian infantry and units, the tactical manœuvre contemplated by Agis was not only perfectly feasible but was well calculated to be eminently effective, under the circumstances.³ Its true character emerges when we take into the account not solely the Lakedaimonian phalanx, but more especially that other factor, the phalanx of the Confederates sweeping down at speed to the assault. Long before the gap in the Lakedaimonian line could be closed by any means whatsoever, the Argeian select corps must inevitably thrust itself into the vacancy, and like a wedge drive the isolated units of the Lakedaimonian left wing ever farther apart from the centre. And this was what actually occurred. The Argeians thereby at once found

² But to Henderson (*Great War*, p. 328) it “rings soundly”, that “the gap was to be filled at once by the two Spartan battalions on his extreme right doubling behind his centre to reach their new posts in time. It was truly a hazardous manœuvre when the foe were a spear’s length away.” A “spear’s length” is good; seeing that the two Lochoi—twelve hundred men, on his own showing (p. 321: a Lochos, on this occasion, is one-seventh of 4,184 men)—must run more than half a mile in order to reach and fill the gap. That is the way battles are fought on paper.

³ Claus. 1. 151: “All action in War is directed on probable, not on certain, results. Whatever is wanting in certainty must always be left to fate, or chance, call it which you will. We may demand that what is so left should be as little as possible, but only in relation to the particular case—that is, as little as is possible in this one case, but not that the case in which the least is left to chance is always to be preferred. That would be an enormous error. . . . There are cases in which the greatest daring is the greatest wisdom.”

themselves in the very situation for which the Greek hoplite must ever have prayed—with spear-arm free against the enemy's unshielded flank.⁴ The Skirites, Brasideians, and Neodamodes thus simultaneously pinned in front by the main body of the Mantineians and their Arkadian allies, outflanked and enveloped on their left by the extreme overlapping files of the Mantineian right, and caught at a disadvantage on their right by the Thousand picked Argeians, were before long overborne; and yielding stubbornly to the frightful pressure were forced back and back upon the parked supply-wagons. It was quite on the cards, that in excess of zeal the Thousand Argeians should turn their attention also to the purely Lakedaimonian battalions, on the rear of which they would by that time discover themselves, as a natural result of the continued forward movement of the Lakedaimonian centre. If it so fell out—if, flushed with success, the Thousand Argeians, leaving it to the Mantineians to finish the business of the broken Skirites and Helots, wheeled to deliver assault upon the flank and rear of the central Lakedaimonian battalions, by way of diversion in favour of their own shattered centre, Agis was likely to see himself in a situation truly desperate. On the other hand, if the two Polemarchs, previously detailed for this special service, carried out their instructions, and brought up their battalions smartly from the right, they would within a few minutes descend like a thunderbolt in their turn upon the flank and rear of the Thousand Argeians whilst these were still busy with the Helots of the left wing. Under a blow so shrewd the Thousand would find the tables turned upon them with a vengeance, and to a certainty would count no further for that day.⁵ In a trice the whole aspect of the battle would be

⁴ For a precisely similar situation—which indeed must have come about in all regular Hellenic battles—compare the fight within the Long Walls of Corinth, Xen. *Hell.* iv. 4. 12: οἱ δὲ Λακεδαιμόνιοι οὐκ ἠπόρουν τίνα ἀποκτείνουσιν ἔδωκε γὰρ τότε γε ὁ θεὸς αὐτοῖς ἔργον, οἷον οὐδ' εὗξαντό ποτ' ἄν. τὸ γὰρ ἐγχειρισθῆναι αὐτοῖς πολεμίων πλῆθος πεφοβημένον, ἐκπεπληγμένον, τὰ γυμνά παρέχον, ἐπὶ τὸ μάχεσθαι οὐδένα τρεπόμενον, εἰς δὲ τὸ ἀπόλλυσθαι πάντας πάντα ὑπηρετοῦντας, πῶς οὐκ ἂν τις θεῖον ἡγήσαιτο;

⁵ Claus. 1. 262: " . . . the moral effect of the surprise, which, as a rule, a reinforcement coming up to re-establish a combat has generally in its favour. Now the effect of a surprise is always heightened if it takes place in the flank or

changed. It would only remain for the Lakedaimonians to take toll of the hopelessly sundered elements of the Confederate army. This decisive counterstroke was to be delivered by the two battalions to be drawn from the right, according to the king's plan.⁶ It was an evolution of no great complexity, but one well within the competence both of his Lakedaimonian hoplites to carry out with celerity and precision, and of their officers to comprehend and direct. Agis could rely to the full upon the tactical flexibility of his troops—if his officers would but do their duty.

Calling to mind the fierce criticism to which the king had recently been subjected in Sparta, and the efforts, all but successful, put forth by those bent on his ruin, we may well be led to suspect that something more than what appears on the face of the narrative lurks in the background. That more than a single officer was involved in the affair, suggests that the insubordination displayed was deliberate, concerted, and prompted by malice. Postponing duty and patriotism to private or party animosities, the two Polemarchs deliberately grasped the apparent opportunity of finally discrediting the king—with the entirely unlooked-for sequel, "the engineer

rear, and an enemy completely engaged in the crisis of victory in his extended and scattered order, is less in a state to counteract it. . . . Here results almost defy calculation, because the moral forces gain completely the ascendancy. This is therefore the right field for boldness and daring."

The Spartan Brasidas said the same thing on the last day of his life, at Amphipolis—Thuc. 5. 9: τὸ γὰρ ἐπὶ τὸν ὕστερον δεινότερον τοῖς πολεμίοις τοῦ παρόντος καὶ μαχομένου.

⁶ It is possible, perhaps, that Agis was here taking a leaf out of Demosthenes' book. At Olpai, on the coast of the Ambrakian gulf, only eight years before this, about the end of 426 B.C., Demosthenes, at the head of a composite force, found himself committed to an action against an army of Peloponnesians and Ambrakiots superior to his own both in numbers and in quality. Seeing that his own right wing would certainly be enveloped by the enemy's left, Demosthenes placed four hundred men, hoplites and light infantry combined, in ambush in a wooded hollow near that end of his phalanx. These, according to plan, fell upon the Peloponnesian left, at the critical moment, when it was in process of folding in upon Demosthenes and his Messenians, and in a twinkling brought about the complete collapse of the enemy's left and centre. This success on the right of the line of Demosthenes more than neutralized the defeat of his left wing by the Ambrakiots. Of the three Spartiate commanders, two, Eurylochos and Makarios, fell in the action. Menedaios got back safe to Sparta, but left his honour behind him. We may be sure that Agis will have learnt all the details of the affair from him. See Thuc. 3. 107 ff.

hoist with his own petar". Doubtless, many a dark story of intrigue in which diamond cut diamond lies hidden for ever behind the obscurely simple phrases of our meagre records.⁷

Be that as it may, a counterstroke after the manner here suggested was neither outside the limits of the military aptitudes of the time, nor ill-advised in the particular situation—whatever be thought of the policy to which that situation itself was due.⁸ The two battalions to be withdrawn from the right were meant for use virtually as a tactical reserve, to be thrown into the fight at the selected moment and at the selected point. The precise extent of the losses of the Argeian crack corps, under the blow of the counter-attack, was for the Argeians themselves to settle. They could reckon securely upon being given all they were willing to take, but it was open to them at any moment they chose to cry enough, and to quit the field; Lakedaimonian moderation in pursuit was matter of common knowledge. It was true that from motives of policy, as was evident later, the Lakedaimonians had no wish to push things to extremity with the Thousand. At the same time, nothing could rob the latter of their right of dying to a man on the field, if they took their obligation to the cause of the Confederates with that degree of seriousness. That Argeian aristocrats should be so keen to spill their blood for the great democratic coalition, was, as probably every one knew, not the most likely thing in the world; the chances were, that recognizing the turn in the tide they would be content with saving their face, and discreetly retire. The projected tactical programme of the action ensured that the purely Lakedaimonian battalions, that precious core of the army of Agis, pitted as they were against the men of the Argeian general levy, who could not

⁷ In Thuc. 5. 16 we read that the exiled king Pleistoanax, in collusion with his brother Aristokles, had suborned the prophetess at Delphi in order to secure his own restoration. This Polemarch Aristokles may perhaps have been identical with that brother of king Pleistoanax.

⁸ Claus. 1. 140: "Critical examination is not merely the appreciation of those means which have been actually employed, but also of all possible means, which therefore must be suggested in the first place—that is, must be discovered; and the use of any particular means is not fairly open to censure until a better is pointed out."

pretend to stand up to them, should suffer the very minimum of loss. Further, it ensured that the enemy's first and shrewdest blow should be diverted upon the Helots, mere pike-fodder; the while that the right wing of the Lakedaimonian line enveloped the Athenians—who were like, such remnant as had the luck to survive the day's work, to carry back home with them a salutary respect for Peloponnesian hoplites for the future.⁹

Such was the general idea of the battle, as conceived in the brain of Agis. In the upshot, he must be content with but a half-success. For the going apley of his deep-laid scheme he had only his two refractory Polemarchs to thank. In order to check the enemy's too pronounced success on the left, he saw himself compelled to intervene with the main body of his troops, and thus to acquiesce in the escape of the Athenians before he had quite done their business for them. Two items of his programme, the counterstroke against the Argeian select corps, and the annihilation of the Athenian contingent, went perforce unrealized. As a set-off against this disappointment, the Confederate centre had been shattered. The Athenians also, through whom principally it had come about that the battle had to be fought at all, by no means got off scot-free; but, heavy as was their loss, two Generals and two hundred rank and file that would never again lift spear and shield came perhaps something short of the toll of which Agis had dreamt as he elaborated his tactical masterpiece. Moreover, what would have been the outcome, had the momentarily victorious Argeians had the wit to make for their own behoof the flank attack that the two Polemarchs had refused to deliver against them? For some sickening moments the king had stood on the brink of a hideous abyss of national disaster and personal ruin. Hot with the recollection of the peril to which the folly, or the disloyalty and malice, of Aristokles and Hipponoidas had wantonly exposed him, it was, we may suspect, in no clement mood that Agis led his victorious battalions back to Sparta. The breaking of the two contumacious Polemarchs is significant of the

⁹ Nearly a quarter of a century elapsed before the Athenians again attacked the "wasps" in their nest (*Xen. Hell.* iv. 2. 12).

way in which the king squared accounts with his discomfited critics, and cowed his domestic enemies. There was no denying that he had saved the whole situation, both military and political, in brilliant style, and, all things considered, very cheaply.

CHAPTER X

THE BATTALIONS OF THE TWO POLEMARCHS

δίχα δ' ἄλλων μονόφρων εἰμί.

AESCHYLUS, *Agam.* 754.

οὐ γάρ τι ἔτοιμον μεταπείσαι τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐναντία ὧν
δοξάζουσιν. PAUSANIAS, ii. 23. 6.

IN the intention of Agis, as it stands in the traditional text, the two battalions to be withdrawn by the Polemarchs Aristokles and Hipponoidas were to come from the right wing. Does that mean the very extremity of the line? Hardly of necessity in any case perhaps; here, beyond question, that sense cannot be intended, seeing that the very extremity of the line is reported as having been held by a “few” Lakedaimonians stationed immediately to the right of the Tegean contingent. If these “few” Lakedaimonians are to prove after all to have constituted two full battalions out of a total of seven, Thucydides will have dealt fast and loose with words in a way not to be tolerated. For these two battalions must have numbered, taken together, something over two thousand men—even the most modest estimate would not reckon them at much under one thousand. To argue that two thousand men, or even half that number, might allowably be spoken of as “few”, in tacit comparison, say, with the balance of purely Lakedaimonian troops, or in comparison with even the entire remainder of the army of which they formed part, is mere special pleading that can serve no useful purpose whatsoever. Thucydides is not to be supposed to have written in a fashion so slipshod, or with caprice so outrageous. If the text here is sound, and if these “few” Lakedaimonians were really identical, wholly or partially, with the two battalions under discussion, there is no honest escape from the admission that in this passage, at any rate, Thucydides must have put down just what he was told by inaccurate and incompetent or interested informants, careless what exactly the word “few” might signify in this context. One would not

adopt this hypothesis, with its fatal consequences, whilst any other was possible.¹

It has been proposed to turn the point of the above criticism by altering the word "few" (ὀλίγοι), to "remainder" (οἱ λοιποί). This substitution would enable us to attach any numerical value we please to the indefinite "remainder"; for this "remainder" would stand as a stock or fund, so to speak, of Lakedaimonian hoplites on the right wing, upon which Agis might draw at will. This, however, will not do; for the apparent exhaustiveness of the statement that the Lakedaimonians ranged their battalions "in succession" (ἐξῆς) next after the Helots, and before the Heraians, seems not to leave us with any such balance of Lakedaimonian hoplites to be accounted for under a heading of "the remainder"—certainly with nothing like so many as two battalions would imply. The full battalions of Lakedaimonians having been already assigned to their place in the line, without any exception expressly specified, is it not really inevitable, in any plain understanding of the words, that a "remainder", or "the remainder", of Lakedaimonians subsequently sprung upon us must signify a body of men, indeterminate, it is true, in point of number, but necessarily below the strength of a battalion? That should seem to be the logical meaning of the word in this connexion, given that its reference is to battalion units at all. That the reference must in fact be to battalion units, and not to troops standing quite outside the battalion organization, is demonstrable. For of troops of the line, outside the battalion organization, we know only the Skirites, and possibly the Royal Guard—both of which groups are accounted for separately, and besides are not on the right wing. The only other troops falling outside the battalion organization would be light troops; but these of course did not stand in the phalanx, and

¹ But it is accepted without misgiving in *Cambr. Anc. Hist.* 5. 273: "The main Lacedaemonian army occupied the centre, with the Tegeates (stiffened by two Lacedaemonian battalions, commanded by Aristocles and Hipponoidas) on the extreme right." And so also Henderson, *Great War*, p. 326: "The centre, from left to right, consisted of five battalions of Spartans, the Heraeans, and the Maenaliens. On the right next them were the men of Tegea, then two more Spartan battalions." Whatever else he says, Thucydides does not say that.

cannot be meant here, even if their presence in the field on this occasion were an ascertained fact. This hypothetical "remainder", therefore, which shall oust the "few", in order to be equated with the two battalions destined in the purpose of Agis to be withdrawn from the right wing, labours under the disadvantage that one is at a loss to know of what Lakedaimonian troops it can have been composed. In altogether different case is the term "few"; for that term carries with it no implication whatsoever that the troops so designated are additional to those constituting the previously mentioned Lakedaimonian battalions. The idea suggested by the use of the word "few", in its present context, is not that of a body of men distinct from, and unconnected with, or additional to, the battalions of hoplites already brought into line; it leaves open at least the possibility, not to say probability, that in them we should see men drafted from one or more of those very battalions.

It seems, then, that we are on the horns of a dilemma. On the one hand, it is not feasible to tinker at the text, and by a stroke or two create a "remainder" large enough to furnish Agis with so considerable a body as two battalions when later he requires them; on the other hand, those two battalions cannot either logically or honestly, we have decided, be spoken of as a "few".

How, then, is it proposed to escape from the dilemma?

Escape is to be effected simply by recognizing that the two battalions in question were not posted on the right wing, in the sense that they held the right extremity of the line.

Are we to imagine, then, that some two, or perhaps more, out of the seven Lakedaimonian battalions were posted in the right section of the phalanx, among the Arkadian contingents—separated by, say, the Heraians and Mainalians from the main body of Lakedaimonians? Adoption of that idea, it is clear, would straightway impugn the completeness and accuracy of the description given by Thucydides of the way in which the phalanx was constituted. It would also be as much as to say that the term *ἐξῆς* here must not be taken strictly in the sense that the Lakedaimonian battalions stood in unbroken sequence. Yet that is just what the word must

mean, if it is to have any genuine significance at all. What Thucydides set out to put on record was the exact order or sequence of the deployed battalions. He was concerned to distinguish without possibility of confusion the Lakedaimonian battalions ranged side by side in the centre in unbroken sequence, from the Helot hoplites to left of them and the Arkadians to right of them. The word ἐξῆς here, therefore, contains the very pith and marrow of his thought.

Up to this point we have taken for granted that the two battalions under discussion were battalions of Lakedaimonian hoplites. Are not our difficulties due simply to that assumption? The difficulty, to re-state it, is that if the description of Thucydides is to be accepted just as it stands, there cannot be discovered on the right wing to serve the turn of Agis any body of Lakedaimonians equal in strength to two battalions. Attempts to save the situation, either by equating the two battalions with the "few" Lakedaimonians on the extremity of the wing, or by substituting some hypothetical "remainder" for those "few", are equally vain. Can a way of escape be found through the hypothesis that the two battalions were in reality battalions of allied troops, and not Lakedaimonian?

Obviously, two battalions of allied troops are available for withdrawal from the right wing when required, and no harm done. Moreover, it must be admitted that no valid argument against this hypothesis can be based upon the use here of the term λόχος in reference to the two battalions; for that term is applied in other passages also to other than purely Lakedaimonian troops. The mere use of the word λόχος tells us nothing. Nor can an objection that contingents of allies were commanded by Spartan ξενόγιοι be held decisive.² For in any case the service here demanded of the two battalions was exceptional; so that, assuming them to have been in fact composed of allied troops, we may allowably also conjecture that their command was taken for the nonce

² Cp. Xen. *Hell.* iii. 5. 7; and iv. 2. 19: ἐπεὶ δὲ συνετάχθησαν ὡς ἐκάστους οἱ ξενόγιοι ἔταξαν (of the order of battle of the allied contingents with the Lakedaimonians at the battle of Corinth). And Thuc. 2. 75: Λακεδαιμονίων τε οἱ ξενόγιοι ἐκάστης πόλεως ξυνεφροστώτες ἠνάγκαζον εἰς τὸ ἔργον (the investment of Plataiai).

by Spartan Polemarchs. Finally, it is to be observed that Thucydides nowhere in so many words affirms that the two battalions were battalions of Lakedaimonians—that is to say, battalions composed partly of Spartiates and partly of Perioikoi.

In spite of the above arguments, however, we must refuse to fall in with the suggestion that the two battalions were composed of allied troops. Not only is the exceptional nature of the service required of them itself an argument against the supposition, but the very silence of Thucydides in this regard seems, if not incompatible, at least not easily reconcilable, with it. If the two battalions were not Lakedaimonian, in the sense of being composed of Spartiates and Perioikoi, they must have been Tegean battalions; and no adequate or even plausible reason is forthcoming to explain how it was that Thucydides refrained from stating that simple fact, but on the contrary so wrote as to suggest that such was not the case. In every other particular phase of the battle he has been careful to superfluity to name the group concerned; in this case alone has he left us in doubt. But in no real doubt either. For who really hesitates to declare his conviction that we have to do with Lakedaimonian, not Arkadian, battalions in the two selected to carry out the tactical movement designed by the king?

The upshot of the matter, then, is that we are faced by the following alternatives.

We may maintain through thick and thin that the two battalions really were on the right extremity of the line—arguing that not only does this appear inevitable on *a priori* tactical grounds, but that the text definitely asserts it. We shall in that case be forced to go on to allow that Thucydides was bound to inform us in so many words, in his description of the phalanx, that such was the place of the two battalions. This could only be, if, instead of the phrase Λακεδαιμονίων ὀλίγοι τὸ ἔσχατον ἔχοντες, what he actually wrote was Λακεδαιμονίων δύο λόχοι τὸ ἔσχατον ἔχοντες. The corruption of the words, if not the result of pure accident, will have originated, we may suppose, with some one who took the expression ἐξῆς καθίστασαν τοὺς λόχους to mean that all the

available and then present Lakedaimonian battalions, without exception, were stationed in the centre of the phalanx, next after the Neodamodes—and that undeniably is the natural meaning of the words—but was puzzled to find that, after all, there turned out to be two Lakedaimonian battalions on the right wing; and thought to mend matters by thus juggling with proportions.

The alternative is to reject the idea that the two battalions were at the extremity of the right wing, and to argue that the term κέρως, in the expression ἀπὸ τοῦ δεξιοῦ κέρως, is not necessarily to be limited to the actual extremity of the entire line, but is applicable, and is here applied, to the right moiety of the phalanx.

Perhaps after all, however, the truth is that the word κέρως in that expression is simply an interloper, foisted upon the text by some one who needlessly boggled at the phrase ἀπὸ τοῦ δεξιοῦ, and set to work κακὸν κακῷ ἰᾶσθαι, unconscious of the monstrous equation δύο λόχοι = ὀλίγοι that was straightway born of his stupidity and rashness.

In conformity with this view of the matter, the Lakedaimonian battalions are to be thought of as all massed in the centre of the phalanx, according to the plain sense of the words of Thucydides; the battalions commanded by Aristokles and Hipponoidas being the last two Lakedaimonian battalions, which came into line in the right centre, immediately before the Heraians.³ The “few” Lakedaimonians on the extreme right will then have been neither more nor less than what the words, fairly taken, imply—a few files contributed by one or more of those central battalions, for the purpose of stiffening and effectively controlling the Tegean wing; just as the older men that were cut to pieces at the wagons must

³ It is obvious that the expression ἐκ δεξιοῦ κέρως, if so it stood originally, may have been due to a misunderstanding of his informant on the part of Thucydides himself. The Lakedaimonian battalions being regarded as an independent group, the battalions of Aristokles and Hipponoidas constituted the right wing of that block of hoplites; and their place in the line may have been so described to the historian in all good faith. This, of course, will not save the narrative, as it stands, from criticism on the score of want of clearness; any more than refusal to admit the existence of defects will turn the edge of such criticism. But it is not without value, if here and there one can perhaps discern traces of the origin of the finished product as Thucydides left it.

also have been detailed from the battalions of the line before the fighting began.

It is obvious that our conclusion, that the battalions of Aristokles and Hipponoidas were actually in the right centre of the phalanx, and not on its right extremity, can hardly hope to pass without challenge. Having escaped the first and second waves, we are like to be overwhelmed by this third and greatest. The military expert will raise forthwith the objection, that the withdrawal of two battalions from the right centre of the phalanx must have created at once a second breach in the Lakedaimonian line, equal in extent to the front of those two battalions. It should seem, therefore, that on purely tactical grounds our conclusion is fatal to the reputation of Agis. Our whole elaborate defence of his sagacity would appear to be in danger of going by the board. Clearly, there can have been no great practical difficulty or theoretical objection in the way of detachment of a couple of battalions from the overlapping right extremity of the line, even in the course of its advance to contact with the enemy. Quite another matter, surely, the creation of a second gap in the right section of the phalanx, by way of mending a gap already existent in the left section. Is it not true, then, after all, that Agis quite lost his head?

Solution of the difficulty is reached precisely through the observation that it was from the right, and not from the left, that Agis proposed to draw the two battalions. For let us calmly consider the cumulative conjoint effect of the two motions—that is to say, the oblique advance towards the right, as carried out by the entire Lakedaimonian line, the while the enemy's phalanx swept forward with similar obliquity in the opposite direction. Must not the resultant of these two simultaneous movements have been that a vacant space or breach, such as that caused by two battalions falling out of the Lakedaimonian line, would make an apparent continuous shift towards the enemy's left wing; so that ultimately, under certain conditions, the gap might have been displaced even quite beyond the extremity of that wing? Doubtless, here as in all normal encounters, long before that result could have come about, displacement of

the gap leftwards, relatively to the phalanx of the Confederates, must have been arrested by mutual contact of the lines. The point to be emphasized is that the farther towards the extremity of the Confederates' left wing the proposed gap shifted before mutual contact, ever the less the risk of its penetration by any portion of that wing of their phalanx. For we are not to discount the psychological pressure exercised upon the enemy by the tremendous overlap of the Lakedaimonians' right wing. The steady folding inwards of that wing, inwards upon the left flank of the Confederates, inevitably paralysed or put a drag upon, the advance of the Athenians and adjacent Argeian files. There can have been no serious risk of those files of the left pitching headlong forwards to take advantage of the gap, thus recklessly courting their own more complete envelopment by the Lakedaimonian right already ominously wheeling in upon them, in accordance with the thrice-familiar procedure of all normal Hellenic pitched battles of this age.

It is important to observe a particular feature distinguishing the gap that would have been created in the right centre by the falling out of two battalions, as proposed by Agis, from the gap actually created on the left. As the Skirites and the Helot brigade were themselves all the while diverging to the left, away from the centre, until they should draw level with the Mantineian right-wing files, ever the wider grew the gap to their right, the longer the battalions of the Lakedaimonian centre continued their own oblique advance towards the right. By the same movement *pari passu*, a gap in the right half of the phalanx would tend to automatic obliteration with a rapidity proportional to that with which the Lakedaimonian right-wing troops, arresting their own advance to the right, began to wheel inwards upon the enemy. There was thus a world of difference between the proposed gap in the Lakedaimonian right towards which the battalions of the centre would be marching continually, and the actual gap on the left, from which those same battalions were just as continually receding in their steady advance to meet the oncoming phalanx of the Confederates.

We still come short of a complete and accurate conception

of the tactical scheme of Agis if we imagine that the business of the battalions of Aristokles and Hipponoidas was to drop out of the line in the course of the general advance. Certainly that is what we gather from Thucydides. According to his description of the affair, the order given to the two Polemarchs was simply the outcome of a frantic impulse on the part of the king when to his horror (δείσας) he realized that he had failed to make adequate allowance for the notorious tendency of an advancing phalanx to drift away to the right—had in fact fallen into the initial error of building up his line of battle from a point not sufficiently far out to the left. Now, in the first place, selection of the point on which the Skirites should take post—and by consequence the general spatial relationship of his entire line to that of the enemy—had lain wholly within his own discretion; for while the enemy's phalanx stood immobile in its chosen position, his own column had naturally been free to deliver its men into line of battle precisely how and where he thought good. In the second place, the Lakedaimonians manifestly outnumbered the enemy. Involved in this already ascertained and quite obvious fact was the consequence that, by exercising judgement in the selection of the point of origin of his phalanx, Agis could make reasonably certain of seeing his own line ranging beyond either wing of the Confederates at the moment of impact.⁴ The more inexcusable, therefore, was the miscalculation of which, according to Thucydides, the king had been guilty. The error was indeed one of quite elementary tactics. What had become of our outspoken and critical greybeard of the day before, that this sorry bungling had been allowed to pass without castigation?

In point of fact, Thucydides is altogether at fault in his conception, or expression, of the affair. The whole business had been carefully thought out, to its smallest details, by the Lakedaimonian king. The Skirites took post precisely where

⁴ Cp. the dispositions of Eurylochos at Olpai (Thuc. 3. 108); where Demosthenes saw that the spatial relation of the enemy's phalanx to his own was such that at the moment of collision Eurylochos and his Peloponnesians on the left wing would surely envelop him, while his left was also outflanked by the Ambrakiots who formed the right wing of the army of Eurylochos. All this, we may be sure, was not a mere accident.

they did—obviously, to those not in the secret, on a point not sufficiently far out to their left—just in order that the Confederates might not take alarm and feel compelled to alter their own dispositions in response. The Mantineians may conceivably even have been congratulating themselves upon the happy turn of events, when they saw themselves occupying a position the most secure and advantageous imaginable—plainly outflanking the Lakedaimonian left, even before the battle was joined, and certain to overlap still farther by the time that contact was achieved. The manœuvring the Skirites into exactly the desired position, relatively to the Confederates' line, was, in fact, the crucial item in the whole operation of deployment. Once that was successfully accomplished, the Confederates were tactically defeated before ever blow was struck; the subsequent struggle becoming simply the unfolding of a series of events, a sort of crescendo of surprises, that lay implicit in this its first element, as flower and fruit lie hidden in the germ.

The two battalions commanded by Aristokles and Hipponoidas came duly into line with the rest. By this means was secured the highly desirable development of the entire Lakedaimonian phalanx out away to the right as far as possible, so as to ensure that the Tegeans should find themselves passing well outside and beyond the Athenian wing as the lines approached each other in the charge. Furthermore, disclosure to the enemy of the king's design with respect to these two battalions, or even of the fact that he had any design at all in his mind, was by this means deferred to the latest possible moment, when counter measures were out of the question for the Confederates. When the signal for advance was given, the role of these two battalions was to stand fast, the while their comrades on right and left swept past them up the field—and then, when their own front was clear, to march obliquely across the rear of the charging phalanx, towards the gap that they would see opening on their left front, to right of the Helot brigade, as that brigade, together with the Skirites, veered away leftwards in accordance with instructions laid down for them before the action. The vacancy caused by their own falling out of the line was bound to close

up almost at once—at all events well before contact with the enemy—partly through the outward thrust of the central battalions, partly through the inward thrust of the Arkadian battalions constituting the right moiety of the phalanx. For the objective of these last, of course, was by no means to continue their advance indefinitely beyond the end of the hostile phalanx, but to swing inwards upon it as soon as ever the success of their own outflanking movement was established. To keep the men well in hand, so as to be able to direct their weight in a decisive direction at the proper moment, was the business of their officers. For that very purpose had the “few” Lakedaimonians been detailed to take post on the tip of the right wing. Since, according to Thucydides, the file-leader of that wing set the angle of direction of the phalanx as a whole, it is clear that upon this detachment in the present case, devolved the responsibility of controlling the tendency of the phalanx to take ground continually towards its own right. The business of these files of the extreme right was to maintain a correct angle of advance, shepherding the wing ever inwards upon the centre; and eventually, when contact with the enemy had been achieved, to carry with them the overlapping units round upon the flank and rear of the Athenians, in order to co-operate with the thrust brought to bear upon the front of the latter by the Lakedaimonian centre and right.⁵

In the event, as we know, the two Polemarchs failed to carry out their instructions. They persisted—whether of malice, or of mere incompetence, or through sheer excitement of battle is here immaterial—they persisted in retaining their original station in the advancing line, in spite of the king’s reiterated orders recalling them to a sense of their special duty and pre-arranged function in the action. This unlooked-for friction of the mechanism threw all out of gear; with the result that the Lakedaimonian left was cut to pieces for want of the timely intervention of the Polemarchs, while,

⁵ Compare what took place in the battle on the Nemea, or so-called battle of Corinth, in 394 B.C.—Xen. *Hell.* iv. 2. 20: οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι . . . ἡγοῦντο ἐπὶ τοὺς ἐναντίους, τὸ ὑπερέχον ἐπικάμψαντες εἰς κύκλωσιν . . . αὐτοὶ δὲ οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ὅσον τε κατέσχον τῶν Ἀθηναίων ἐκράτησαν, καὶ κυκλωσάμενοι τῷ ὑπερέχοντι πολλοὺς ἀπέκτειναν αὐτῶν, καὶ ὅτε δὴ ἀπαθεῖς ὄντες, συντεταγμένοι ἐπορεύοντο.

on the right, the bulk of the troops were to all intents and purposes idle. That the day did not end tragically for the Lakedaimonians was due, in part, to the fortunate circumstance that the Argeian select corps failed to see and grasp its opportunity; not less also to the unruffled courage with which Agis and his battalions stuck to the business immediately in hand, of wiping out the enemy's centre before mending the situation on their left. Prejudice has, of course, not been slow with the suggestion that the Lakedaimonian hoplites were too dull and stupid to appreciate the peril into which the tactical collapse had brought them—that they were, in fact, not sufficiently intelligent to run. Fortunate the people whose soldiers exhibit this sort of stupidity.⁶ For without the fighting spirit neither numbers nor equipment nor generalship can either command or deserve success.

⁶ We may apply to the Lakedaimonian hoplite, *mutatis mutandis*, Napier's noble eulogy of the British soldier: "It has been asserted that his undeniable firmness in battle is the result of a phlegmatic constitution uninspired by moral feeling. Never was a more stupid calumny uttered! Napoleon's troops fought in bright fields where every helmet caught some beams of glory, but the British soldier conquered under the cold shade of aristocracy. No honours awaited his daring, no despatch gave his name to the applause of his countrymen, his life of danger and hardship was uncheered by hope, his death unnoticed. Did his heart sink therefore?" (*Hist. of the War in the Peninsula*, vol. 2, p. 401, of new ed. in six vols., 1882). And equally applicable the same historian's immortal description of the British fighting-man at Albuera (vol. 3, p. 170): "Nothing could stop that astonishing infantry. No sudden burst of undisciplined valour, no nervous enthusiasm weakened the stability of their order . . ." A "stubborn and inflexible bravery" (Napoleon's phrase) was as characteristic of the Lakedaimonian hoplite in his best days as of the British infantry at Waterloo, and a century later, in the Ypres salient. See also Xen. *Kyrop.* iii. 3. 19: αἱ μάχαι κρίνονται μᾶλλον ταῖς ψυχαῖς ἢ ταῖς τῶν σωμάτων ῥώμασι. And v. 2. 35: εἰ μέντοι ὥσπερ πρόσθεν διὰ τοὺς εὖ μαχομένους ἔτι καὶ νῦν αἱ μάχαι κρίνονται, θαρρῶν οὐδὲν ἂν σφαλείης.

CHAPTER XI

THE STRATEGIC PROBLEM AND ITS SOLUTION

Ὅτι δ' ἕκαστα μετὰ λογισμοῦ καὶ προνοίας ἐπραττε, καὶ
διότι πάντα κατὰ λόγον ἐξέβαινε τὰ τέλη τῶν πράξεων
αὐτῷ, δῆλον ἔσται διὰ τῶν λέγεσθαι μελλόντων.

POLYBIOS, 10. 2.

UNDER the conditions governing land warfare in Greece in the fifth century B.C., when a commander had at his disposal practically but a single instrument, the infantry of the line, the Mantineian plain presented to an invader a problem of quite peculiar difficulty. For its main southern entrance, so narrow as to admit of virtually complete occupation by masses of hoplites, constituted an ideal line of defence. Conspicuous among its advantages was that of being reasonably secure against a turning movement. True, it was far from impracticable, even for considerable bodies of heavy infantry, to ascend directly from the Tegean plain, and, fetching a compass by way of the hills lying behind the Kapnistra ridge, to come down into the basin of Luka. What, however, was to be gained by that step? The subsidiary bays or offshoots of the central plain were simply so many minor traps of the most hazardous character, as is illustrated by the perilous experience of Agesilaos on an occasion already described. An assailant adopting such course found himself still outside the heart of Mantineian territory; while the defender, operating always upon an inner line, was, by executing a retrograde movement of trifling extent, once more in a position to contest the invader's advance. The operative decisive direction of attack was here determined by topography in the most definite and conclusive manner imaginable. Hence, of all the battle-grounds of Hellas, this of eastern Arkadia presented one of the most formidable problems her generals were ever called upon to solve. For that reason the Mantineian plain was the scene of operations among the most interesting and instructive in the long drama of Greek domestic warfare.

What was in the mind of Agis when he marched from

Sparta to open the campaign? We must certainly supply this lacuna in our defective record, and assume that the king did not go forth without some definite idea, some main lines of military policy laid down and approved. What, then, was the king's strategic idea? Primarily, his objective was the rescue of Tegea from the clutches of the Confederates, by intervention in support of the Lakedaimonian party in that town. Clearly, however, the unparalleled magnitude of the effort now put forth by Sparta implied that she looked a good deal farther than this.¹ A mortal blow was aimed against this daring and grandiose combination that threatened to imprison the Lakedaimonians within their own stronghold of Lakonia. Upon the issue of the campaign depended much more than simply the fate of Tegea; defeat meant the political annihilation of Sparta, and this time the Spartans were determined to strike a paralysing blow. At what point, then, and how, was that blow to be struck?

The city of Mantinea being indicated as the strategic objective, a consequence of considerable importance in its bearing on the king's design seems to lie implicit in the fact that the extra-Peloponnesian allies of Sparta were also directed to mobilize and march to his support. If, as would appear inevitable, Agis, in order to allow time for these contingents also to reach the zone of operations, was to be under the necessity of sitting inactive at Tegea a full week after the concentration of his Arkadian levies, this would seem to point to an original intention of forcing the

¹ Claus. 1. 11: "... the political object, as the original motive of the War, will be the standard for determining both the aim of the military force and also the amount of effort to be made." Cp. Bernh. 2. 183: "Besides the strength of the adversary, the nature of the purposes pursued by policy with the aid of war affects, before all, the amount of force the belligerents employ. . . (p. 202). Policy restricts war in its nature to attain the utmost possible, and subordinates it to definite purposes; it creates the general situations in which war must be conducted, and selects the time for its outbreak; policy sets war distinctly limited problems to solve in compliance with the laws of its own nature; but policy must never interfere in the practical conduct of war itself, and, with its demands, must submit to what is suitable and attainable from a military point of view."

On the other hand (p. 194), "War is always a means only for attaining a purpose entirely outside its domain. War can, therefore, never itself lay down the purpose by fixing at will the military object."

Confederates within the walls of Mantinea and of investing that city, and so smoking out the wasps in their nest.² At all events, the summoning of the northern contingents plainly does not square with the course of operations as actually conducted. The summons is intelligible only upon a presupposition that the Confederates would not be given an opportunity of fighting a decisive battle before Agis could be joined by the troops from central Greece. To what purpose should those distant allies have been directed to the seat of war, if from the first the king had in mind to force the pace to such degree that their arrival, march they never so fast, must be altogether belated? The only reasonable inference is that there came about some change of plan, that the actual course of operations was a divergence from the strategic scheme³ upon which the mobilization of the northern allies had been originally ordered.

It was at Tegea, most probably, that Agis first became aware that the Eleians had withdrawn from Mantineian territory. Practically, what this came to was that the forces of the Confederates themselves also were not yet fully concentrated; for, beyond question, in the long run the Eleians, sore as they might just then be feeling, would, if only in their own interest, return to throw their weight into the scale. In this news, of the retirement of the Eleians in dudgeon, we discover the factor that modified the designs of Agis. The vigorous and resourceful commander, that knows his own mind, does not wait for his adversary to reconcile conflicting theories of operations. Agis now saw clearly that it was for

² This was the plan adopted in 385 B.C., by Agesipolis (Xen. *Hell.* v. 2. 4). The expression in the text is taken from the address of Timolaos of Corinth, at the opening of the Corinthian War—Xen. *Hell.* iv. 2. 12.

³ Claus. 1. 165: "Strategy is the employment of the battle to gain the end of the War; it must therefore give an aim to the whole military action, which must be in accordance with the object of the War; in other words, Strategy forms the plan of the War, and to this end it links together the series of acts which are to lead to the final decision. . . . As these are all things which to a great extent can only be determined on conjectures, some of which turn out incorrect, while a number of other arrangements pertaining to details cannot be made at all beforehand, it follows, as a matter of course, that Strategy must go with the Army to the field in order to arrange particulars on the spot, and to make the modifications in the general plan which incessantly become necessary in War. Strategy can therefore never take its hand from the work for a moment."

him to discard his original strategic scheme,⁴ and to assume the active offensive without delay. Three thousand hoplites lost from the enemy's battle-line meant an initial advantage not to be contemned, even by Lakedaimonians, if by any means the balance of the army of the coalition could be induced to accept battle before the Eleians recovered from their ill humour.⁵ Fortune having thus at the outset offered him a clear gain of time that he could turn to advantage by bold initiative, it was not for him, in the interest of some cut-and-dried scheme, to reject her proffered favours, but to meet her half-way, and aim at securing the fullest measure of success with as little delay as might be.⁶ The general political and military situation being such that a solution was impossible, except through victory in the field, it was clearly imposed upon Agis, as his strategic aim, to force a battle under the conditions most favourable, tactically, to himself—that is to say, in the absence of the Eleians. He resolved, therefore, to cross the frontier immediately, and to establish himself in an advanced post, with the object of bringing the Confederates to action at the earliest possible moment.⁷

The Lakedaimonians met with no opposition, but were allowed to pass through the Mytika portal and enter Mantineian territory without challenge. Doubtless, ample warning of the inroad had been conveyed to the Mantineians by

⁴ Bernh. 1. 87: "We can certainly never be too strong in battle, yet there may be situations where we must give up numbers in return for other advantages. This will be the case, for example, if the opportunity is propitious for acting rapidly, and would be lost, should we wait until the largest numbers possible are concentrated."

⁵ Bernh. 2. 232: "Since we can but very rarely exactly calculate at what time hostile reinforcements can arrive and intervene, the postulate with which the assailant must comply as a matter of principle is: Victory must always be gained as rapidly as possible. From this results for the defender the injunction to delay as long as possible the decisive issue."

⁶ Claus. 2. 134: "all time which is not turned to any account falls into the scale in favour of the defence. He reaps where he has not sowed. Every suspension of offensive action, either from erroneous views, from fear or from indolence, is in favour of the side acting defensively." A perfect illustration of this truth is found in the operations of Nikias before Syracuse.

⁷ Claus. 1. 279: "According to the nature of the thing, a great battle has never at any time been an unprepared, unexpected, blind routine service, but a grand act, which partly of itself and partly from the aim of the Commander, stands out from amongst the mass of ordinary efforts."

signallers stationed in the Skope, which gazed afar over the plain in all directions. Eventual invasion of their territory was, at any rate, an experience upon which the Mantineians could securely reckon. How otherwise was the campaign to be conducted to a definite issue—unless, indeed, as an alternative to invasion by the Lakedaimonians, the Confederates were themselves prepared to take the initiative, and to challenge Agis beyond their own borders? Obviously, the Confederates can hardly have been counting upon the king's lingering indefinitely at Tegea, in the fond hope that the enemy would play into his hand by coming afield to attack him on his own ground. Invasion, therefore, was certain from the first. To imagine that Agis stole a march upon an unprepared and unsuspecting enemy, is wholly to misunderstand the situation. There was also very good reason for acceptance of the inevitable with equanimity, on the part of the Mantineians. The time of year being what it was, that is to say the month of August certainly, and nearer the end rather than the beginning or middle of the month,⁸ the crops were probably by that time all safely garnered; and stock, implements, stores, and valuables of every kind, had already been transferred, we may be sure, from outlying farms to the shelter of the walls, or to the plain behind the town. The firing of a few farm buildings, the seizure or destruction of maybe some trifling store of grain—that, we may feel pretty sure, summed up the damage that could be done by the Lakedaimonians scouring the plain to the south of Mantinea. The fact was, that, so far as concerns these preliminaries and normal operations of Hellenic warfare, the inroad had been launched perforce at the wrong time of year—too late, and that by some weeks.⁹

⁸ The expedition against Argos had fallen pretty late in the season (Thuc. 5. 57: τοῦ δ' ἐπιγιγνομένου θέρους μεσοῦντος); so that this Mantineian campaign must have been carried out quite at the end of summer. Contrast the operations of Epameinondas in 362 B.C., which fell in June—Xen. *Hell.* vii. 5. 14. For the time of harvest on the Mantineian plain, see Fougères, *Mantinee*, p. 56: "D'ordinaire, la moisson commence dès le 20 juin, pour durer jusqu'aux derniers jours de juillet." In some years it has begun as early as the 13th or 17th of June (see Foucart, in *Rev. arch.* vol. 33, p. 322, after Fougères).

⁹ Perhaps recognition of this fact lies behind the argument of the Athenians in Thuc. 5. 61: ἐν καιρῷ γὰρ παρῆναι σφᾶς.

To the lead of Agis the Confederates, as we have seen, effectively countered—not, as had been hoped, by offering battle in the plain, but by occupying the Alesion ridge. They thus signified clearly enough their determination to play a waiting game; nor did it call for any extraordinary acumen to divine the calculations upon which that policy was based.¹⁰ The general situation was now “like a stale at chess, where it is no mate, but yet the game cannot stir”. Agis, to all seeming, was now himself fairly caught in a trap of his own baiting. His situation grew hourly more critical, and dalliance might well prove fatal. Arrival of reinforcements for either side would almost to a certainty turn the scale; abundantly clear also was it that the odds under this head were greatly in favour of the Confederates. Already, no doubt, runners had been sent off in hot haste by the Confederate generals urging the Eleians to return to the theatre of operations, where the fate of the coalition was trembling in the balance. Agis also seems to have appealed for reinforcement. At any rate, king Pleistoanax was bringing up the military reserves of Sparta the very hour that saw the brilliant finale of the war game as played by his colleague.¹¹ And, just too late to avert

¹⁰ Claus. 2. 135: “If the defensive is the stronger form of conducting War, but has a negative object, it follows of itself that we must only make use of it so long as our weakness compels us to do so, and that we must give up that form as soon as we feel strong enough to aim at the positive object.”

Cp. Bernh. 2. 211: “Attack alone achieves positive results; mere defence always supplies but negative results. The maximum possible success is by itself, therefore, attainable only through the offensive, and the results of the offensive are increased by boldness. In this way, from the injunction to strive always after the greatest success, results the further fundamental demand of acting always offensively, if the conditions in any way admit of this; where we are obliged to act on the defensive, to conduct it always with the reservation of acting offensively afterwards, and never to be urged into a passive defence except under direst necessity. There may certainly be cases where a purely passive defence is imperative, and where the gain of time is the maximum possible success.”

¹¹ Since the arrival of Pleistoanax with reinforcements was clearly a matter of urgency, I imagine that he must have taken the most direct route from Sparta to Tegea—namely that by the Kleisoura defile (for the most part practically identical with the modern highway running to Tripolitsa); or, alternatively, he followed the line of the Kelephina river upwards past the site now occupied by Arachova, and so down the valley of the Sarandapotamos by way of (ancient) Karyai. The former is the shorter (27 miles), but the latter, though longer (29 miles), is the easier, route. For these, consult W. Loring’s article: ‘Some

defeat, three thousand Eleian hoplites, and an additional thousand from Athens, reinforced the Confederates. Can there be any reasonable doubt that these reinforcements were all simultaneously converging upon Mantinea in response to urgent representations from the respective leaders in the field? Agis was doubtless thoroughly conversant with all previsible elements in the strategic situation. No sane forecast could fail to appreciate the imminent hazard of the re-entry of the Eleians into the theatre of war within an interval to be reckoned rather in hours than in days.

The audacious manœuvre, carried out with consummate precision and disciplined composure, by means of which Agis extricated his army from the cul-de-sac of the Mantineian plain, has received explanation in the foregoing pages. The feint upon Alesion, pushed to within a hair's breadth of irretrievable committal, had the further purpose of achieving what, upon the evidence of Thucydides himself, it actually did achieve. This further and deeper purpose was that of inspiring the Confederates with an illusory conviction that the Lakedaimonians had retreated because they had flinched at the last moment from pushing home their assault. In this connexion due stress must be laid upon the absurd conclusion drawn by the Greeks in general, no doubt under assiduous Athenian advertisement, from the notorious disaster to Lakedaimonian arms in the island of Sphakteria—a conclusion strongly reinforced by the recent equally notorious fiasco in Argolis.¹² The incredulous amazement, not unmingled with a sort of fatuous despisal, which both professed friend and declared foe of Sparta felt in regard of these blows to her prestige was thus astutely used by Agis as a

ancient Routes in the Peloponnese', in *Journ. of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 15 (1895), p. 47 ff. and Map. Probably the troops would make the stage from Sparta to Karyai, and bivouac there; so as to have the short stage to Tegea (9 miles) next day.

¹² Cp. Thuc. 4. 40: παρά γνώμην τε δὴ μάλιστα τῶν κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον τοῦτο τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἐγένετο· τοὺς γὰρ Λακεδαιμονίους οὔτε λιμῶ οὔτ' ἀνάγκη οὐδεμιᾷ ἤξιουν τὰ ὄπλα παραδοῦναι, ἀλλὰ ἔχοντας καὶ μαχομένους ὡς ἐδύναντο ἀποθνήσκειν—referring to the surrender at Pylos. See also Thuc. 5. 28: κατὰ γὰρ τὸν χρόνον τοῦτον ἦ τε Λακεδαιμόνων μάλιστα δὴ κακῶς ἤκουσε καὶ ὑπερώφθη διὰ τὰς συμφοράς—referring to the years round about 421 B.C.

means of scoring a brilliant and paralysing triumph over precisely the most blatant of her critics and contemners.

The Confederates walked straight into the trap set for them by Agis. Flushed with this second triumph over the ostensible pusillanimity of the king, they threw over their policy of masterly inaction, with the chance it offered, of their finding themselves within a few hours, or a few days at longest, at an advantage in point of numbers, such advantage as conceivably might have compensated technical inferiority and turned the scales of battle in their favour.¹³ The choice being once again open to them, through the Lakedaimonians' retreat beyond the frontier, they evacuated their secure position on the heights and came down to the level ground. Here they were eager now to accept battle, if Agis also should be willing; if not, he must either be content to return ignominiously to Sparta with tacit admission of yet another strategic defeat, or must just sit still at Tegea waiting for something to turn up to extricate him from his humiliating predicament. If he decided to repeat his inroad into Mantineian territory, he must this time fight for it. In any case the next move lay with him; while the moral and practical advantages of the situation lay, so the Confederates flattered themselves, entirely on their own side. The Confederates can hardly have failed on their own part also to weigh the possibility of their finding the northern allies of Sparta making inopportune appearance upon the rear of their position. Nervousness on this score may even perhaps have had something to say in their decision to accept the wager of battle at last, if Agis cared to repeat his challenge. Thucydides, however, ignores, if ever he was cognizant of, any such factor in their calculations, and attributes the Confederates' change of policy solely to their mood of elation and self-confidence as a direct outcome of the manœuvre of Agis.

If we have hit the truth in our conclusion that the Confederates elected to hold the inner line of defence, certain

¹³ Cp. the Achaians at Kaphyai, two centuries later—Pol. 4. 11: οὕτω κακῶς ἐχρήσαντο τοῖς πράγμασιν, ὥστε ὑπερβολὴν ἀνοίας μὴ καταλιπεῖν . . . ἀφήμενοι τῶν οἰκείων τόπων καὶ καιρῶν, εἰς τὰ τῶν πολεμίων προτερήματα συγκατέβησαν. Τοιγαροῦν ἀκόλουθον τὸ τέλος ἐξέβη τοῦ κινδύνου ταῖς ἐπιβολαῖς.

consequences of capital import for our appraisal of the generalship of Agis at once emerge.

We may with confidence assume that in his second advance Agis moved his army by the shorter easterly Tegea-Mantineia road.¹⁴ Not until his leading troops had drawn well clear of the Mytika gap would he direct his column leftwards, towards the centre of the plain, with a view of securing elbow-room for deployment. This course guaranteed him a considerable advantage, in that it enabled him to lean with his right upon the high ground on his own side of the plain. The right wing, in any case, was intrinsically the most effective portion of a hoplite line; but the strength of the Lakedaimonian right, on this occasion, was immensely augmented, simply through the spatial relationship under which it stood to the controlling features of the battle-field. Every yard of normal diagonal advance towards the right, the onset once begun, accentuated this advantage. Conversely, any advantage apparently belonging to the enemy's line in its original position, before it entered upon the charge, was *pari passu* diminished when their phalanx moved rapidly outwards, advancing obliquely into the plain, away from the high ground on which their left wing had leaned. Consequently, Agis had no hesitation in pre-arranging that two brigades on his right should fall out of his own phalanx from the moment the onset began. The vacancy thus produced was bound to be obliterated automatically and speedily as his phalanx pressed forward to contact with the

¹⁴ The line of march and the movements of Agis on this occasion were in all essentials repeated by the Spartan tyrant Machanidas, when he advanced against the Achaians under Philopoimen, in 207 B.C. (Pol. 11. 11). It was the divergence leftwards, after passing through the Mytika portal, that gave colour to the idea that the Lakedaimonians had been making back to their original position at the Herakleion; and that idea, once started, led inevitably to the conclusion that the battle just then and just there was none of their seeking, but was forced upon them as a surprise. But the truth is that the statement that Agis was making for his old camping ground (Thuc. 5. 66: πρὸς τὸ Ἡράκλειον πάλιν ἐς τὸ αὐτὸ στρατόπεδον ἰόντες), gives us not an independent and authenticated fact, but merely an erroneous interpretation of an observed but misunderstood movement. For a similar item of false inference, see the story of the order supposed to have been given to the Skirites, for them to try to recover touch with the centre. The genesis of that apocryphal element seems pretty clear.

enemy. The proximity of the hills to his right wing, and the presence of his cavalry, poor though it may have been, on that wing, taken in conjunction with the outwards drift of the hostile phalanx, relieved him of all apprehension on the score of a flanking movement at that end of his line.

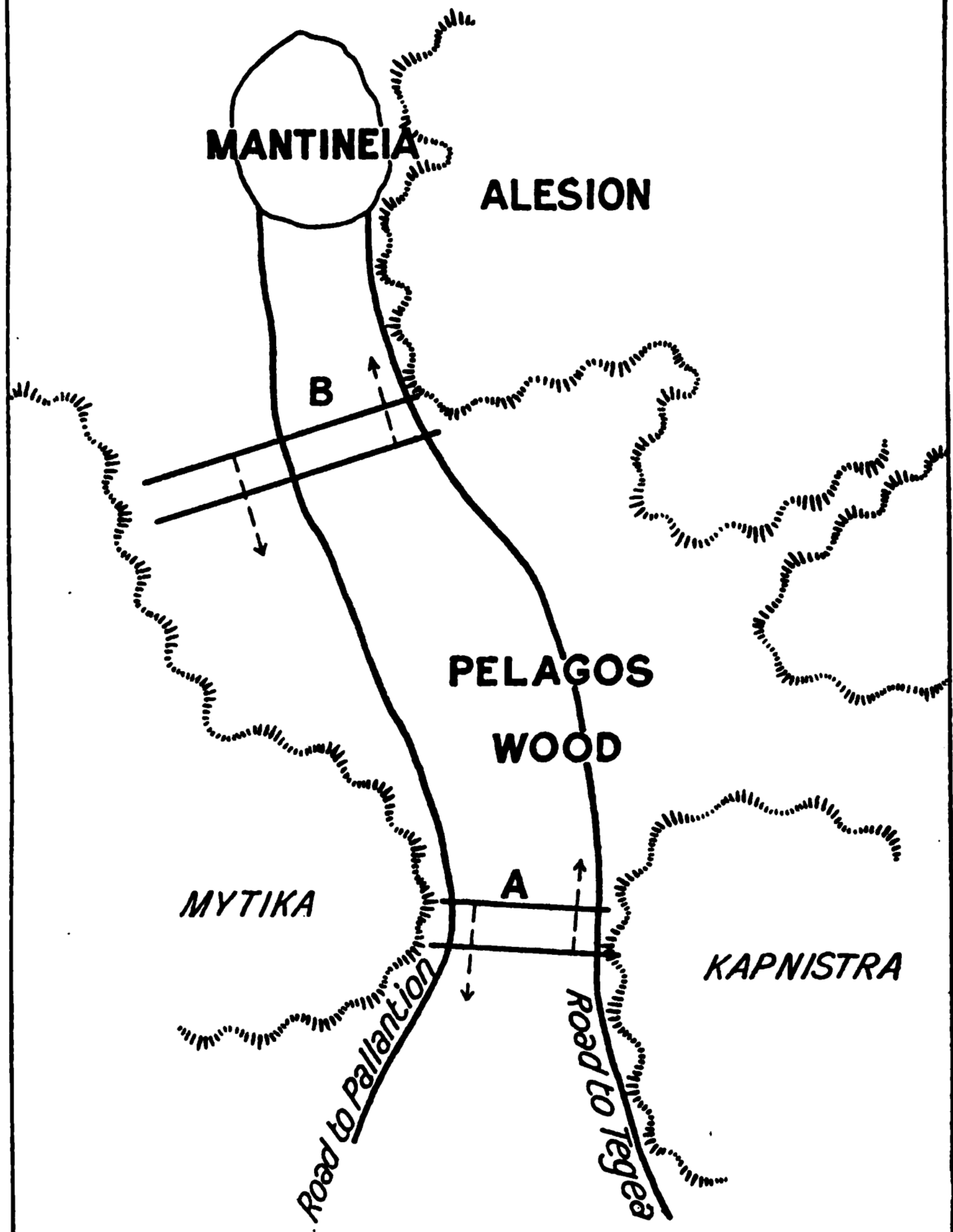
How the tactical manoeuvre of a divergent objective for the advance of his line was designed to co-operate with the above described initial advantages, is readily perceived. By this device, the hostile array was dislocated—pulled asunder, thanks to the fatal attraction of the breach into which the Argeians plunged, to the complete dissolution of the cohesion that was the very life of a hoplite phalanx.¹⁵ True, the Lakedaemonian phalanx itself also had been sundered into two several sections. There was, however, all the difference in the world between the deliberate and calculated evolution by which on the left wing the Helot brigade and the battalion of Skirites were detached and sacrificed for a definite tactical purpose, and the haphazard and purely opportunist disruption that here, as so often, sealed the fate of a hoplite array composed of units not welded together in a coherent but flexible phalanx under a single head. Precisely this unreflective and uncorrelated action on the part of constituent groups was it, that time and time again ruined Greek armies.¹⁶ Conversely, it was largely because supreme control was centralized in their commander-in-chief, in something more than merely nominal fashion, that the Lakedaemonians had a habit of emerging victorious from the stern test of battle.

The tactical objective of Agis here was identical in nature with that of Epameinondas nearly sixty years later in this same theatre. The aim was to shoulder the enemy away from the hills, out into the plain. To achieve this object, Agis skilfully reinforced the natural advantages of his own alignment, as compared with that of the enemy, by means of the manoeuvring power of his troops. Acting upon the first principle of war, of striving always for the highest possible

¹⁵ Claus. I. 271: "If a certain artificial formation and cohesion of an Army is the principal condition under which the bravery of the troops can gain a victory . . . then the breaking up of this formation is the decision."

¹⁶ Cp. Soph. *Antig.* 672 ff.

Sketch to show
Relation of the Outer Position(A)
and of the Inner Position(B)
respectively, to the
Communications with
MANTINEIA



measure of success with the utmost energy,¹⁷ both Agis and Epameinondas, each of them with perfect consciousness of the nature of the problem and the means available for its solution, played for a decisive issue.¹⁸ Both commanders laboured under the initial disadvantage of being forced to give battle upon ground of the enemy's own deliberate and unhindered choice. The Theban general relied upon strengthening enormously his own left wing, and refusing his right; for which reason he approached the enemy by the Pallantion road, on the western side of the plain. The Spartan leader concentrated the weight of his offensive on his right, and consequently moved, there is little doubt, by the eastern road, which would bring him by the shortest route directly upon the centre and left of the enemy's position. Explanation of this difference of procedure is given, not so much by insisting that Agis was dominated by the military tradition of his own day, as by analysis of the spatial relationship of the Confederates' two alternative lines of defence respectively to their direct line of retreat upon their base in Mantinea.

A Mantineian army on the defensive holding the Mytika-Kapnistra position was liable, if its right were broken, to be rolled up from that flank, and so to find itself pushed quite off its shortest line of retreat. For the city of Mantinea, distant some three miles from the suggested position, does not lie directly behind the centre of that position, but somewhat to the north-west of it, and thus appreciably closer to the right than to the left of the defence. Now under the normal course of battle in the fifth century B.C., this characteristic, with the possibilities hinging upon it, had no very high degree of practical significance. For the right wing, as a rule, could be relied upon to sweep before it the opposing

¹⁷ Claus. 1. 242: "Whoever reads history with a mind free from prejudice cannot fail to arrive at a conviction that of all military virtues, energy in the conduct of operations has always contributed the most to the glory and success of arms." Cp. Bernh. 2. 208: "To strive always for the highest possible success with the utmost energy is the first principle of all warfare, and that commander will never acquire highest fame who falls short of this demand."

¹⁸ Cp. Pol. 13. 3: ὑπολαμβάνοντες οὐδὲν οὔτε λαμπρὸν οὐδὲ μὴν βέβαιον εἶναι τῶν κατορθωμάτων, εἰ μὴ τις ἐκ τοῦ προφανοῦς μαχόμενος ἡττήσῃ ταῖς ψυχαῖς τοὺς ἀντιταττομένους . . . μόνην δὲ τὴν ἐκ χειρὸς καὶ συστάδην γιγνομένην μάχην ἀληθινὴν ὑπελάμβανον εἶναι κρίσιν πραγμάτων.

left; so that there was in fact not very much likelihood of the assailant's being able to cut in behind the right of the defender's line. And at the same time the probability of the enemy's success at the other end of the line was of comparatively little moment; for when all was done, he would still not be master of the western road, by which the defender's right communicated, always by an inner line, with the city. Nor might the assailant follow up the success of his right, and push out to seize this western road, except at the price of uncovering his own line of retreat and staking all upon the dubious issue of a renewed struggle, this time with the defender's equally victorious right-wing troops. A century later, with the advent of Epameinondas, the situation suddenly changed, and these local factors acquired an entirely fresh value. The very pith and marrow of the tactical scheme of Epameinondas in his last and greatest battle was, that he not only gave preponderance to his left wing by massing it in depth, but also attacked by the left, thus ensuring that his left-wing troops should penetrate the hostile front at a definite and selected point, bursting through the enemy's right by dint of sheer weight, hacking a way through just in order to secure the most far-reaching results of tactical success by seizure of the western road in rear of the allied forces, thus cutting off their centre and left from their base in Mantinea. To him that had eyes to see, and the brain to apply his observations in a tactical scheme, the decisive direction of attack upon an enemy holding the outer line of defence was clearly indicated as lying through the right wing of his position.

The inner position differed from the outer position, not only in respect of its closer proximity to Mantinea—a most desirable attribute, from the point of view of a Greek hoplite¹⁹—but also in the fact that it was now not the right, but the left, wing of the defence that stood nearest to the

¹⁹ Cp. Homer, *Il.* 15. 737:

οὐ μὲν τι σχεδὸν ἐστὶ πόλις πύργοις ἀραρυῖα,
ἧ κ' ἀπαμυναίμεσθ' ἑτεραλκεία δῆμον ἔχοντες.

And a faint echo of this in Tacitus, *Hist.* 3. 18: 'et propinqua Cremonensium moenia quanto plus spei ad effugium, minorem ad resistendum animum dabant.'

walls of the town. The mere normal development of action, therefore, would, for the right wing, automatically entail separation from the town, a separation the more pronounced, the more determinedly the men of that wing pressed forward in their career of victory; while defeat of the defender's left—a defeat that under normal conditions was just as certainly to be expected as the success of his right—would at once place the victorious assailant at that end of the line athwart the defender's line of retreat. The dispositions and tactics of Agis were informed by his intuitive perception of this the decisive direction of attack, and by his determination to strive for the issue that, in the given circumstances, carried with it the most far-reaching consequences, and inflicted the maximum of loss upon the two principal elements of the hostile coalition, that is to say upon the Athenians and the Mantineians, holding the left and the right extremities respectively of the Confederates' line. He would, in effect, break the enemy's front at a point of his own selection, crush Argeians and Athenians between the upper and the nether millstones of his own centre and right, and sweep the debris of their contingents before him as he swung his victorious battalions across the path by which the men of the Confederates' now isolated right wing must endeavour to win back to the shelter of the town.

That this battle-plan of Agis just missed the fullest measure of success, was due neither to defects inherent in the plan itself nor to unlooked-for tactical intervention on the part of the enemy. Still less was it due to any failure of his own infantry. On this field, as always, throughout the long and glorious history of Lakedaimonian arms, the men were splendid. Internal friction, which, in the shape of misunderstandings, unforeseen accidents, and personal shortcomings, is so apt to impede the smooth working of the mechanism in all operations of war, was responsible here also for partial breakdown of the delicately adjusted machinery.²⁰ For here

²⁰ Claus. 3. 222: "The whole conduct of War is like the action of a complicated machine, with an immense amount of friction; so that combinations which are easily made on paper can only be carried into execution by very great exertion. Therefore the free will, the mind of the General, finds itself impeded

we come upon a weakness inherent in ancient Greek military methods; which, in the fifth century B.C., at any rate, despite almost perpetual warfare, afforded upon the whole but little training for subordinate officers. The higher the natural gifts of a commander-in-chief, the more likely was he to find himself standing alone, without officers to whom he could look for intelligent and nice co-operation in working out his plans in the field—fortunate indeed if political enmities did not secretly rejoice to thwart what ignorance and ineptitude could neither assist nor maybe even comprehend. This battle of Mantinea is a conspicuous example of the danger to which a Greek commander was ever exposed, of finding his subordinates fail him, from one cause or another, at a critical moment.

Wisdom is justified of her children. The sort of audacious confidence in himself, and in the men under his command, that was displayed at Mantinea by king Agis—the high confidence and audacity that on occasion has the courage to repudiate the chary circumspectiveness binding upon lesser men, and to abandon the obvious and safe for a decisive master-stroke—is revealed in the operations of every great captain of war.

The strategist's contribution being left out of the account for the moment, the factors of success in war may be reduced to two—Mobility and Fighting-Value. Superiority of his troops in respect of marching power or rate of movement guarantees the leader partial control of the conditions of Space and Time. The second factor comes into play in that final arbitrament that alone gives relevance to the antecedent movements of troops. For all the strategy in the world is futile, if an army in the subsequent fighting cannot make good the advantages gained by manoeuvre. Let the manoeuvres be of the first degree of brilliancy, it is combat alone that decides in war. Of what avail, then, for a commander to bring his troops into a situation of relative advantage, if, when decisive collision at last comes about, they cannot be

in its action at every instant. . . . By this friction many a good idea is lost, and we are obliged to lay down a plain, simple scheme, when by a somewhat more complicated one greater results might be obtained."

relied upon to gather the fruits of his skill and insight and daring, and of their own co-operation in these preliminaries of action? Nay, should he meet disaster at that point, should the valour and resolution of his men fail him there, irresponsible arm-chair criticism will be all too apt to belittle his strategic ability, and to decry the dislocated plan as the botchery of a charlatan whose very successes are but evidence of luck that reaps where it has not sown.²¹ It is but too easy to forget that the art of operating is itself a real element of superiority—that “the mode in which the combat is prepared, and the form in which it is fought out, may enhance or reduce the prospects of success, that the operative design of the actions directly affects their consequences, and that bold and clever operations give also the weaker army the chance of mastering the stronger opponent”.²²

Given Fighting-Value, therefore, even grave deficiencies in other respects may, in the final award, on occasion stand compensated; so that leader and led emerge victorious from situations that violate, as the phrase goes, every “principle of war”, every “rule of strategy”—as though victory were tied to a system, or were matter of academic procedure, the inevitable outcome of a sort of strategical geometry.²³

²¹ Cp. what Napier says of Wellington at Salamanca (*Hist.* 4. 296): “The battle ought not, and would not have been fought but for Marmont’s false movement. . . . Yet it is certain, if Wellington had retired, the murmurs of his army already louder than was seemly would have been heard in England. . . . It would have been said that Wellington desponding and distrusting his brave troops dared not venture a battle on even terms. . . . His name would have been made, as Sir John Moore’s was, a butt for the malice and falsehood of faction, and his military genius would have been measured by the ignorance of his detractors.”

²² Bernh. 2. 307: “Combat alone decides in war; the sole purpose of all operations is to bring it about under favourable conditions. . . . The art of operating is a real element of superiority, and military history proves that they were just the great commanders who owed their victories to the boldness and to the cleverness of their operations.”

²³ Claus. 1. 90: “We fall into an error of this description if we attribute to strategical combinations a power independent of tactical results. We read of marches and manœuvres combined, the object attained, and at the same time not a word about combat, from which the conclusion is drawn that there are means of conquering an enemy without fighting.” Id. 2. 143: “In Strategy there is no victory. . . . the strategic success is the successful preparation of the tactical victory.” And 2. 182: “. . . every strategic combination rests only upon the tactical results, and these are everywhere, in the bloody as well as in the bloodless solution, the real fundamental grounds of the ultimate decision.”

Venture, on the contrary, is the very soul of war, a prime condition of the soldier's "battle of dreams"—that ideal battle that is the ambition of every leader with imagination to conceive greatly, and courage and ability to execute with sureness and unflinching energy what his brain pictures. For in the long run every commander must take risks; every time he fights—and his main business is to fight—he stakes reputation upon a hazard.²⁴ Victory being the grand requisite, the leader's primary virtue is to put his troops in the way of winning victory for themselves, by sheer hard fighting. If this main demand, of victory in the field, be satisfied, within the time-limit, if any, imposed by the very character of the troops under his command, or by the political or economic or other conditions to which perforce a leader of armies must pay heed, if the cost in men and material and all else that war so voraciously devours be not in grievous or unreasonable disproportion to the gains—what other criteria of generalship are really relevant?²⁵ While, on the one hand, before Fate has made her award, no military situation is of its own nature permanent and final, no military problem of its own nature insoluble, there is, on the other hand, no decision that is mathematically correct, no line of attack or defence, no battle formation or procedure, that possesses inherent magical efficacy and guarantees infallibility; but if upon calm review the whole scheme of operations is seen

²⁴ Claus. I. 20: "...from the outset there is a play of possibilities, probabilities, good and bad luck, which spreads about with all the coarse and fine threads of its web, and makes War of all branches of human activity the most like a gambling game. . . . (p. 21) But War is no pastime; no mere passion for venturing and winning; no work of a free enthusiasm: it is a serious means for a serious object."

²⁵ Cp. Napier, *Hist.* 4. 150: "With him (i.e. the general) rests the choice of shortening the scientific process, the judging how much or how little ought to be risked, how much trusted to valour and discipline, how much to his own genius for seizing accidents, whether of ground, of time, or of conjuncture, to accelerate the gain of his object . . . we must measure him by the greatness of the exigency and the energy with which he acts. Wellington's object (i.e. the capture of Badajoz) was great, his difficulties foreseen, his success complete. A few hours' delay, an accident, a turn of fortune, and he would again have been foiled! ay! but this is war, always dangerous and uncertain, an ever-rolling wheel and armed with scythes. Was the object worth the risk—did its gain compensate the loss of men—was it boldly, greatly acquired? These are the true questions."

to exhibit a certain curious property of inevitableness,²⁶ as though it had been the predestined method by which the given objective was to be attained—that is all pure gain for the leader's reputation. These, and these only, are the principles that must govern our appraisal of the strategic and tactical abilities of king Agis.

With truth in after years could Alkibiades, a gambler born, aver in his own flashy fashion that his diplomacy had forced the Lakedaimonians to stake their all at Mantinea upon the hazard of a single day.²⁷ That was doubtless true enough, and clever enough; but what of it?²⁸ What Alkibiades, and with him the Athenians all, utterly failed to grasp, was the truth—never more true than in his own day—that in the long run, when the diplomatist had spoken his last word, it was still for the soldier to make it good;²⁹ and

²⁶ Claus. 1. 148: "Criticism must not, therefore, treat the solution of a problem by a great General like a sum in arithmetic; it is only through the results and through the exact coincidences of events that it can recognise with admiration how much is due to the exercise of genius, and that it first learns the essential combination which the glance of that genius devised." Id. 1. 166: "A Prince or General who knows exactly how to organise his War according to his object and means, who does neither too little nor too much, gives by that the greatest proof of his genius. But the effects of this talent are exhibited not so much by the invention of new modes of action, which might strike the eye immediately, as in the successful final result of the whole. It is the exact fulfilment of silent suppositions, it is the noiseless harmony of the whole action which we should admire, and which only makes itself known in the total result."

²⁷ Thuc. 6. 16: Πελοποννήσου γὰρ τὰ δυνατώτατα ξυστήσας ἀνευ μεγάλου ὑμῖν κινδύνου καὶ λαπάνης, Λακεδαιμονίους ἐς μίαν ἡμέραν κατέστησα ἐν Μαντινείᾳ περὶ τῶν ἀπάντων ἀγωνίσασθαι· ἐξ ὧν καὶ περιγενόμενοι τῇ μάχῃ οὐδέπω καὶ νῦν βεβαίως θαρσοῦσιν. Cp. Plut. *Alkib.* 15: μέγα δ' ἦν τὸ πεπραγμένον ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, διαστήσαι καὶ κραδαῖναι Πελοπόννησον ὀλίγου δεῖν ἀπασαν, καὶ τοσαύτας ἀσπίδας ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ περὶ Μαντίνειαν ἀντιτάξαι Λακεδαιμονίοις, καὶ πορρωτάτῳ τῶν Ἀθηνῶν ἀγῶνα κατασκευάσαι καὶ κίνδυνον αὐτοῖς, ἐν ᾧ μέγα μὲν οὐδὲν ἢ νίκη προσέθηκε κρατήσασιν, εἰ δ' ἐσφάλησαν, ἔργον ἦν τὴν Λακεδαίμονα περιγενέσθαι.

²⁸ Bernh. 1. 88: "Nowhere more than in war is it necessary to deal with realities only, and not to be deceived, or to be dazzled, or to be carried away by unjustifiable expectations through any semblance of force. Before the stern realities of war all sham passes away like false human greatness before the majesty of death, and only what there is of actual tactical, strategical, and moral forces will survive."

²⁹ Bernh. 2. 195: "If, therefore, policy has the right and the duty to set the military a task apparently suitable for the attainment of the political purpose, it must, on the other hand, be made responsible for this task to be in conformity with the essence and nature of war, and to be practical from a military point of

that the more the venue shifted from Council chamber and popular Assembly to battle-field, the more surely inclined the balance of advantage to the side of Sparta. Against the spasmodic enthusiasm of half-trained civic militia she brought into play her own superb fighting-machine, her solidly organized and highly trained peerless Lakedaimonian infantry; against the crude and ill-co-ordinated tactics of amateurs,³⁰ whose patent of command was conferred, with jealously limited tenure, by the suffrages of a garrulous assemblage that was the helpless victim of its own fickle moods, conflicting policies, ill-considered purposes, and its own peculiar cult of the mediocre, she played ever the accumulated practical experience of lifelong commanders, craftsmen in war, who inherited the martial instincts and the military tradition of generations of born soldiers.

In the crisis of the Persian war, the Agiad royal House of Sparta had given to Greece a tactician far in advance of his Age, in the person of that Pausanias who commanded the national army at Plataiai. At Plataiai, according to the grotesque tradition masquerading until the other day³¹ in the garb of History, the nicely articulated plans of Pausanias had been wrecked by the obstinacy and ill-timed punctilios of a subordinate. At Mantinea, the tactics of one of the ablest kings of the Eurypontid House encountered in their turn unexpected obstacle, in disloyalty or incompetence on the part of general officers. Beyond all question, both accounts are deeply tinged by Athenian malice, which thus securely

view. Policy, therefore, needs always military advice, to be able to estimate correctly its own and the enemy's military forces, and to determine its political purposes in conformity with the proportionate strength of these forces. Policy must remain in constant touch with the military authorities, for everything that policy can plan and attain rests in the last instance on the military forces behind it, and which it must use if it cannot carry its point by diplomatic means."

³⁰ As the more intelligent observers saw even then—Xen. *Resp. Laced.* 13. 5: ὁ βασιλεὺς προσκαλέσας πάντας παραγγέλλει τὰ ποιητέα. ὥστε ὁρῶν ταῦτα ἡγήσαιο ἂν τοὺς μὲν ἄλλους αὐτοσχεδιαστὰς εἶναι τῶν στρατιωτικῶν, Λακεδαιμονίους δὲ μόνους τῷ ὄντι τεχνίτας τῶν πολεμικῶν. And Xen. *Mem.* iii. 5. 21: τῶν δὲ στρατηγῶν οἱ πλείστοι αὐτοσχεδιάζουσιν—speaking of those of Athens.

³¹ On this, see my Article, 'The Greeks at Plataiai', in the *Journ. of Hellenic Studies*, xviii (1898), p. 33 ff. But a good deal of water has run under the bridge since that was written.

derided a pitch of technical accomplishment that neither Athens herself nor any other Greek state of that day could pretend either to rival or to withstand. The hostile tradition, however, is in the unfortunate position of proving far too much. For let prejudice and malice say what they would, it could not be denied that both at Plataiai and at Mantinea the Lakedaimonians had been brilliantly victorious; whereas on both occasions, according to the manifest drift and purport of the story, hopeless and ignominious defeat should have been their portion—their armies on both fields shattered to fragments through collapse of the Higher Command. Herodotos and Thucydides, the purveyors of this hostile but self-refuted tradition, must each in turn be fain to render tribute of admiration to the superb fighting quality of the Lakedaimonian rank and file. Our part here has been to do belated justice to their leader in this Mantineian campaign—one of those born leaders who, taking no counsel of their fears, but accepting with serene self-reliance risks that appal a mediocre mind, compel their astonished adversaries to taste the bitterness of decisive and sometimes humiliating defeat. In the list of those talented commanders that contributed to the development of the Art of War among the Greeks, a place, and that not the lowest, must be reserved for the name of King Agis of Sparta.

EXCURSUS A

THE FOREST CALLED PELAGOS

πολλοὶ ἐν Ἀρκαδίῃ βαλανηφάγοι ἄνδρες ἔασιν.

HERODOTOS, I. 66.

ACCORDING to Polybios, the Mantineian sanctuary of Poseidon Hippios stood at a distance of seven stades, a little under a mile, from the town; and the ground about it was flat, and suitable for cavalry.¹ According to Pausanias,² the sacred precinct extended along the foot of Alesion—from which we infer that it must have been not far from the main road to Tegea, if indeed it was not actually skirted by that road. Beyond the temple, the road ran on into an oak forest, called Pelagos,³ a name suggested, perhaps, by the appearance of the tossing sea of greenery, as viewed from the surrounding heights. Pausanias has omitted to specify the interval between the temple and the forest; nor does he say how far in the direction of Tegea the forest extended in his own day. It seems that it must have broadened out in a southerly direction, so that it impinged at last, at a distance of thirty stades from Mantinea, upon the Pallantion road. One would imagine, then, that the Pallantion road ran across the plain at first quite clear of the forest, and entered its skirts only at a distance of thirty stades from the town, and thereafter continued within the forest as far at least as the frontier, which on that side of the plain was marked by the shrine of Zeus Charmon. We have no evidence that the forest stretched out southwards of the narrow part of the plain, but one would imagine that straggling outliers at least must have been found all along the foot of the hills in the

¹ Pol. 9. 8: ἤδη δὲ τῆς Θηβαίων πρωτοπορείας συναπτούσης πρὸς τὸ τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος ἱερόν, ὃ κεῖται πρὸ τῆς πόλεως ἐν ἑπτὰ σταδίοις. Id. 11. 12: κατὰ τοὺς περὶ τὸ Ποσειδῶν τόπους, ὄντας ἐπιπέλους, καὶ πρὸς ἱππικὴν εὐφρεῖς χρεῖαν.

² Paus. viii. 10. 2: παρὰ δὲ τοῦ ὄρους τὰ ἔσχατα τοῦ Ποσειδῶνός ἐστι τοῦ Ἰππίου τὸ ἱερόν, οὐ πρόσω σταδίου Μαντινείας. Τοῦ σταδίου, Hitzig-Bluemner; ἑπτασταδίου, Bursian.

³ Paus. viii. 11. 1: Μετὰ δὲ τὸ ἱερόν τοῦ Ποσειδῶνος χωρίον ὑποδέχεται σε ἀρυῶν πλήρες, καλούμενον Πέλαγος· καὶ ἐκ Μαντινείας ἢ ἐς Τεγέαν ὁδὸς φέρει διὰ τῶν ἀρυῶν. Μαντινεῦσι δὲ ὄροι πρὸς Τεγεάτας εἰσὶν ὁ περιφερὴς ἐν τῇ λεωφόρῳ βωμός.

direction of Tegea. In the Vertsova recess, in the time of Pausanias, were still to be seen considerable remnants of the forest; for, referring to this inlet, he tells us that the road from Tegea to Argos ran through country clothed with oak forest, in the depths of which stood a shrine of Demeter.⁴

In another place Pausanias mentions an oak forest called Skotitas.⁵ This forest started at the Hermai on Mount Parnon, where Lakedaimonian territory marched with the territories of Argos and Tegea. As Leake remarks, the forest here mentioned was but the remains of a primeval forest that had been gradually obliterated during the centuries preceding the visit of Pausanias to the Peloponnese. Part of this same forest of Skotitas is described by Polybios as lying between Tegea and Sparta.⁶ He relates how Philopoimen concealed himself with a body of Achaians in Skotitas,

⁴ Paus. viii. 54. 5: 'Η δὲ ἐς Ἄργος ἐκ Τεγέας ὁχίματι ἐπιτηδειοτάτη καὶ τὰ μάλιστα ἐστὶ λεωφόρος . . . κατὰ δὲ τὴν εὐθείαν αἱ τε Δρυὶς εἰσὶ πολλαὶ καὶ Δήμητρος ἐν τῷ ἄλσει τῶν Δρυῶν ναὸς ἐν Κορυθεῦσι καλουμένης· πλησίον δὲ ἄλλο ἐστὶν ἱερὸν Διονύσου Μύστου.

Cp. Leake, *Morea*, 2. 334: "... the branch of the Tegeatic plain eastward of Steno was the Corythic plain. In the time of Pausanias it appears to have been chiefly occupied by a forest of oaks. We have already seen that at the southern entrance of the Mantinic plain there was a similar forest. The observation of Pausanias upon the various kinds of oak which the latter contained, argues that the forest was large, as well as its name Pelagus, which seems to imply an extensive wilderness, such as the moderns express by the word λόγγος. It is very possible, therefore, that a forest occupied at that time all the central part of the plain of Tripolitza, together with the branch of it eastward of Steno." The forest wealth of Arkadia is referred to in what purports to be the *Apologia pro vita sua* of Apollonius—Philostr. *Vit. Ap.* 8. 7, p. 161: ἐστὶ δὲ πολυλήϊος καὶ ποώδης ἡ Ἀρκαδία καὶ ὑλώδης οὐ τὰ μετέωρα μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐν ποσὶ πάντα . . . Δρυτόμων τε δαίται πολλῶν ἡ χώρα καὶ τοῦτο ἐκ παιδῶν γυμνάζονται. The last words may have been true for the 1st or 3rd century A.D.; but at the present day, what Arkadia needs is re-forestation.

⁵ Paus. iii. 10. 6: 'Ιοῦσι δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν Ἑρμῶν ἐστὶν ὁ τόπος οὗτος ἅπας Δρυῶν πλήρης· τὸ δὲ ὄνομα τῷ χωρίῳ Σκοτίταν οὐ τὸ συνεχὲς τῶν δένδρων ἐποίησεν, ἀλλὰ Ζεὺς ἐπὶ κλησὶν [ἔσχε] Σκοτίτας, καὶ ἐστὶν ἐν ἀριστερᾷ τῆς ὁδοῦ δέκα μάλιστα που στάδια ἐκτραπομένοις ἱερὸν Σκοτίτα Διός. Cp. Leake, *Morea*, 2. 524: "The forest Scotita, no remains of which are now to be seen in the place, described by Pausanias, seems to have been obliterated by a process of gradual diminution, during the two or three centuries which preceded his visit to the country. It is evident from Polybius, that in his time it covered a much larger portion of the country around Sellasia; for he describes it as lying between Sparta and Tegea."

⁶ Pol. 16. 37: καὶ νυκτιπορήσας ἐνεργῶς, περὶ τὴν ἑωθινὴν ἐνεκάθισε τὴν στρατιάν ἐν τοῖς περὶ τὸν Σκοτίταν προσαγορευομένοις τόποις, ὅς ἐστι μετὰ τῆς Τεγέας καὶ τῆς Λακεδαιμόνου.

Cp. Livy 35. 27 (copying Polybios): 'cum per loca confragosa iter esset.'

whither he had marched by night from Tegea. He had previously sent forward a detachment, which was to bivouac in the neighbourhood of Sellasia, and make an incursion into Lakonia the following day; if hard pressed by the enemy the detachment was to fall back into the forest, upon the supporting troops lying perdu there with Philopoimen. The mercenaries of king Nabis did in fact sally out from Pellana against the Achaian marauders, and having thus been lured into the forest were there duly ambushed by Philopoimen. He had made a forced march from Tegea the previous night, and halted in Skotitas "about the time of the morning watch". It appears that the greater part of the country between Tegea and the valley of the Oinous was heavily timbered at that time, about 200 B.C.

At various dates, then, and at various points, we have evidence of the existence in ancient times of a forest belt extending—of course not uninterruptedly—out of the Mantineian plain to within ten or twelve miles of Sparta. The hoary shrine of Poseidon Hippios, constructed, as Pausanias tells us,⁷ solely of oaken timbers, was a standing memorial of the pristine extent of the forest in a northerly direction. Doubtless this shrine, for many generations, had lain deep in the heart of the woodland, like the shrine of Demeter already mentioned, or that of Zeus Skotitas in the forest to which he gave, or owed, his name. As population advanced, the limits of the forest were more and more curtailed, until at some time an end was put to encroachment upon this valuable national asset. Thus, for several centuries apparently, the limits of the forest remained more or less stationary. Later, again, the process of destruction went on unchecked; and now almost every vestige of the ancient forest has long since disappeared, at least from that portion of the plain with which we are here concerned in connexion with the battle of Mantinea.

The existence of the forest accounts for the Hellenic watch-tower placed on the shoulder of the Mytika spur. This tower, we may conjecture, was held and maintained by

⁷ Paus. viii. 10. 2: τὰ δὲ ἐξ ἀρχῆς τῷ Ποσειδῶνι τὸ ἱερὸν τοῦτο Ἀγαμήδης λέγονται καὶ Τροφώνιος ποιῆσαι, δρυὼν ξύλα ἐργασάμενοι καὶ ἀρμόσαντες πρὸς ἀλληλα.

the Mantineians, who depended upon it for signals of warning of hostile or suspicious movements beyond the leafy screen through which their neighbours and inveterate enemies, the Tegeans, might endeavour to steal a march on them. The military significance of the forest emerges very clearly in the account of the surprise attempted by Epameinondas in his last campaign, in the summer of 362 B.C. Hardly had his wearied cavalry got back to Tegea from their demonstration against Sparta, when they were sent against Mantinea. They succeeded in penetrating as far as the temple of Poseidon before they were discovered.⁸ Their advance had, no doubt, been screened by the forest through which the road from Tegea ran, at any rate after crossing the frontier. In contrast with this, the advance of Epameinondas himself from Tegea with his entire army on the last morning of his life was carried out in full view of the enemy drawn up in the strait between Mytika and Kapnistra. That central portion of the plain, across which Epameinondas directed his march towards the western hills, was to all intents and purposes clear of trees, just as it is to-day.⁹ The Mantineians and their allies were posted on the frontier-line, with the Pelagos forest immediately at their backs. By marching to a flank, Epameinondas was able to bring his reinforced left wing to bear upon their right. This direction of attack opened to him the Pallantion road, clear of the forest, as already explained.

⁸ Pol. 9. 8 (quoted above). According to Xen. *Hell.* vii. 5. 15, the Athenian cavalry which unexpectedly intervened to spoil the plans of Epameinondas had reached Mantinea only a little while before the Theban and Thessalian horse were sighted from the walls. This must have been perhaps early in the afternoon; for Pol. 9. 8 says that Epameinondas προσέμισε τῇ Μαντινείᾳ περὶ μῆσον ἡμέρας. Polybios also says that the Athenians ἐπιφαίνεσθαι κατὰ τὸν τῆς Μαντινείας ὑπερκείμενον λόφον, and from his phrase ὥσπερ ἐπίτηδες (*quasi ex compacto*) it is clear that we are to picture them as arriving just in the nick of time, by way of Alesion. I think that the truth was that the cavalry had actually reached the town, and that when the alarm was given they did not gallop down the road to meet the raiders, but went up to the lower slopes of the ridge of Alesion, and thence charged down upon them.

⁹ Xen. *Hell.* vii. 5. 21: τὴν μὲν συντομωτάτην πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους οὐκ ἦγε, πρὸς δὲ τὰ πρὸς ἑσπέραν ὄρη καὶ ἀντιπέραν τῆς Τεγέας ἡγεῖτο· ὥστε λόξαν παρείχε τοῖς πολεμοῖς μὴ ποιήσεσθαι μάχην ἐκείνῃ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ. It is quite clear from this, that the enemy in position could observe every movement of the army of Epameinondas. Cp. also what we are told about the dust-screen (quoted on p. 61).

Again, in 207 B.C., Machanidas of Sparta issued from Tegea to try conclusions with Philopoimen, who was holding Mantinea with the army of the Achaian League. Machanidas conducted his advance in three columns. Having traversed the narrows without check, he directed his march upon the right of Philopoimen's position, as though with a design of delivering his main attack on that side.¹⁰ Machanidas evidently adopted this course from a desire to draw clear of the Pelagos wood as quickly as possible. To that end, he crossed as soon as he could conveniently do so, from the Tegea road to the Pallantion road lying outside the limits of the forest. The Tegea road, on the contrary, as we have seen, lay wholly within the forest from a point not very far to the south of the temple of Poseidon. This temple marked the left of the position of Philopoimen; the army of the League being drawn up along the northern edge of the great trench, beyond the limits of the forest in this direction.

Finally, the existence of the forest in this lower portion of the Mantineian plain, as above described, if assumed for 418 B.C., gives point to the expression used by Thucydides in his description of the abrupt withdrawal of the Lakedaemonians from before the position of the Confederates on the heights of Alesion. His phrase is discovered to be strikingly appropriate to the scene,¹¹ calling up a picture of the Lakedaemonian column as it gradually drew off down the plain, until it finally disappeared from view, swallowed up within the screen of trees at the point at which the Tegea road entered the forest, a mile or so to the south of the extremity of the Alesion ridge.

¹⁰ Pol. 11. 12: ὁ δὲ Μαχανίδας τὸ μὲν πρῶτον ὑπέδειξεν, ὡς ὀρθίᾳ τῇ φάλαγγι προσμίσγων πρὸς τὸ δεξιὸν τῶν πολεμίων· ἐπεὶ δ' ἐπλησίασε, λαβὼν σύμμετρον ἀπόστημα, περιέκλα τὴν δύναμιν ἐπὶ δόρυ, καὶ παρεκτείνας, ἴσον ἐποίησε τὸ παρ' αὐτοῦ δεξιὸν τῷ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν εὐωνύμῳ.

¹¹ Thuc. 5. 65: ἐπειδὴ ἀναχωροῦντες ἐκεῖνοί τε ἀπέκρυψαν.

EXCURSUS B

THE NUMBERS ENGAGED

Ἐνιοὶ δὲ τῶν ἀκρίτως τὰ τοιαῦτα θεωμένων τάχα ἂν
φήσαιεν, ἡμᾶς οὐκ ἀναγκαίως ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἐξακριβοῦν τοὺς
ὑπὲρ τῶν τοιούτων λόγους. POLYBIOS, 3. 31.

THE engaging frankness with which Thucydides deprecates or forestalls criticism of what he has to say about the numerical strength of the two armies has not failed of effect with his readers.¹ Yet, if the question of numbers was to be raised at all—and in serious military history it was quite inevitable—one would have preferred some definite statement, even though in the same breath it had been qualified by the proviso that from one cause or another the figures given were untrustworthy. Rhetorical generalities, such as the assertion that this battle was “by far the greatest that had been fought in Greece for a very long time”, will hardly serve our turn; more especially since only a few pages earlier in this same Book of his History Thucydides has already brought under review an army which he describes² as finer than any that had ever before been concentrated under a Spartan king. How did this host compare with that, in point of numbers? Was it really impossible for him to say? The plea of the systematic reticence of the Lakedaimonians in regard to their own affairs can scarcely be held sufficient to exempt him from obligation to furnish some statistics, for what they might be worth.³ The plea, indeed,

¹ Cp. Grote, 6. 351: “Thucydides, with a frankness which enhances the value of his testimony wherever he gives it positively, informs us that he cannot pretend to set down the number of either army.”

² Thuc. 5. 60: στρατόπεδον γὰρ δὴ τοῦτο κάλλιστον Ἑλληνικὸν τῶν μέχρι τοῦδε συνηλθεν. This was the army raised for the invasion of Argolis, earlier in this same year. Thucydides there gives the strength of the Boiotian and the Corinthian contingents only (5. 57). Though the word κάλλιστον primarily has in view quality (cp. καὶ οὗτοι πάντες λογάδες ἀφ’ ἑκάστων), it must include numerical strength as well.

³ It is a curious commentary on the plea here advanced by Thucydides, that we now know actually more about the military organization of the Lakedaimonians than we do about that of the Athenians—thanks to Thucydides himself, very largely. Cp. Mitford, *Hist.* 1. 387: “It seems impossible now to ascertain

is not strictly relevant to the issue; for what was required of him fell a good deal short of the point at which official reticence became an obstacle, of the magnitude suggested in the pleading. Secrecy on the part of the Lakedaimonians proved no insuperable obstacle in the way of his coming by certain other items of information, of exactly the same kind as that here desired. How can he vouch, for example, for the accuracy of his statement that the proportion of troops sent back from Orestheion for home defence amounted to precisely one-sixth of the total levy? What was the basis of that statement? Was it merely an inference from some principle that was known or believed to be applied as a piece of routine in such cases; or was it a special fact of that particular occasion, definitely ascertained as such from some trustworthy authority? Again, the number of Lakedaimonians slain in the battle was reported as three hundred—a figure in itself sufficiently suspicious—but, “it was hard to ascertain exactly.” Apparently, then, it was little better than guess-work. But why should not an approximate estimate have been adventured for the living as for the dead?

It was doubtless true enough that in practice the details of Lakedaimonian military organization were freely manipulated in order to baffle the curiosity of intelligent foreigners over-inquisitive about the fighting strength of the Spartans. Nevertheless, Thucydides cannot be allowed to shelter himself behind that probability; for all that was required of him here was simply some reasonable estimate of the grand total of the Lakedaimonians and their allies as they stood ready for battle on that particular field—an estimate in regard to which it will take much to convince us that it could not have been made, with sufficient practical accuracy, by any one with eyes in his head, without reference to the troublesome what was at any time the exact formation of the Athenian phalanx, or indeed of that of any other republic, except the Spartan.” Certain is it, that when Eduard Meyer writes (*Gesch. des Altertums*, 3. 470): “So zahlreich die modernen Untersuchungen über das spartanische Heerwesen sind, so wenig ist es möglich gewesen, zu sicheren Resultaten zu gelangen”, he is too pessimistic. A good deal must now be regarded as reasonably certain, in connexion with what E. Cavaignac (in *Klio*, vol. 12, p. 262) calls “l'éternelle et irritante question de l'organisation militaire spartiate”—though that welcome result is by no means due to him.

question of Lakedaimonian military organization. Can this modest requirement be held to be satisfied by the vague statement that the army of Agis obviously outnumbered that of the Confederates? Thucydides himself, moreover, is clearly but ill at ease. Not content with his own apology, he professes anxiety to do his best for his readers, and to that end offers certain data—with the result that he has kept his commentators busy from that day to this.

A very host of problems threatens to overwhelm us as soon as we attempt a serious analysis of the account from this point of view. Two items only, on the Lakedaimonian side, receive exact numerical evaluation. These are the Skirites, six hundred strong, and the Royal Guard of three hundred men. The latter corps, be it noted, finds mention, and its strength is given, only incidentally—in a passage that stands in no direct connexion with the one in which the numbers on the Lakedaimonian side are the special topic. Were it not for the apparently quite casual occurrence of those half-dozen words referring to the corps of Guards, we had been left altogether uninformed even of its presence in the field, except as a matter of inference from the presence of the king himself. As for the Heraians and the Mainalians, their very name, let alone their numerical strength, receives no further notice when once the fighting has begun. Even the Tegeans, who in all probability counted for a good deal more in every way than did the rest of the Arkadians, are but once mentioned outside the Chapter dealing with the order of battle. Nay, only incidentally do we learn that not all, even of the Lakedaimonians themselves, were brought into the fighting line—a detachment, the strength of which is not stated, having been detailed to the train parked in rear of the phalanx. Whether any light troops took part in the operations, on either side, is a question towards the answering of which Thucydides furnishes absolutely no material; unless, possibly, the phrase “within stone and javelin range”, in the story of the feint attack upon Alesion, is to be interpreted of the skirmishing of light troops preliminary to the main assault. Helots are not again mentioned, after the sentence describing the Lakedaimonian levy in full force—if indeed the word

“Helots” in that passage actually refers to light-armed Helots and Helot orderlies at all, and not rather to Helots trained to service in the line, none other in fact than the Veterans of Brasidas, and the Neodamodes brigaded with them. The relation of these Helots to the stated total of seven battalions in action is left in obscurity. The very acme and pitch of perplexity is attained when we are called upon to decide, firstly, whether the two battalions that should have been brought up from the right by the two Polemarchs are included in the before-mentioned total of seven, and, secondly, whether they are identical with the “few” Lakedaimonians holding the extremity of the right wing. To each and all of these questions answers the most diverse and conflicting have been given by modern investigators.

Here is a sufficiently formidable list of problems lurking within the elaborate description of one of the most important episodes of the whole war, a description, let us remind ourselves, coming from the pen of one who is acclaimed first and foremost as a military historian and model of conscientious and painstaking research—nay, who himself lays claim to that distinction. The Father of History himself, with all his naïveté, gullibility, and happy-go-lucky inconsequence, could hardly have extended the tale of debatable points suggested by this narrative of Thucydides. Remains yet to be mentioned the most curious feature of all. For not less astonishing is it than true, that embedded within these Chapters, so strikingly deficient in numerical data, there lies a treatise in miniature on Lakedaimonian army organization, the direct and immediate outcome of which, in regard to the most considerable and in every way most important section of the embattled host, that of the Lakedaimonians themselves, is an exact and definite numerical result—the very thing that Thucydides himself disclaims as quite beyond his own power of discovery, both for the aggregate and for its components. Yet, in spite of his positive disclaimer, commentators of both ancient and modern times, to a man, confidently operate with the data of this inset, and naïvely announce without shadow of misgiving that there stood in the Lakedaimonian phalanx at Mantinea, excluding the Skirites,

precisely 3,584 men. Neither asked nor answered is the question why Thucydides should not have used the data of his own Chapter to perform for himself the arithmetical operation⁴ that leads to this result, and should not have simply stated that result without all this beating about the bush and this futile talk of official secrecy. On the contrary, he here roundly and most emphatically asserts the actual impossibility of discovering how many Lakedaimonian hoplites took part in the battle. He adds what is tantamount to proof of the good faith of his disclaimer, namely the assertion that the depth of file was determined for each battalion by its own commander—thereby directing our attention to the influence of a factor of unknown value in the calculation. If words mean anything, these mean that Thucydides himself had neither ascertained, nor could by any method open to him ascertain, how many Lakedaimonian soldiers actually fought in the great battle.

In what way is it proposed to override this deliberate and emphatic disavowal on the part of Thucydides himself? Not, it is to be hoped, by invoking his remark about “average” depth of file. For the expression he uses is clearly not to be understood, here at any rate, in the strict mathematical sense, i.e. as a figure obtained by dividing the total strength of the battalion by the number of files. Thucydides, by his own admission, had not ascertained the number of men in a Lakedaimonian battalion; and if Thucydides did not possess that information, who else among Athenians possessed it? Had he known that figure, he could have given the total Lakedaimonian strength without further parley, by simply multiplying by seven. If the word “average”, by which the Greek ἐπίπρον in this place is generally rendered, is to be used here at all, it can only be in a loose sense, in the sense of “general run”;⁵ expressing general conformity to some

⁴ More especially as Thucydides was apparently rather good at that difficult business of simple arithmetic; cp. 7. 42, with Arnold's note. But of course Thucydides did not reach his correct total of seventy-three ships in that passage by the same processes of addition and subtraction as his modern commentators.

⁵ Cp. Thuc. 2. 51: τὸ μὲν οὖν νόσημα τοιοῦτον ἦν ἐπίπρον τὴν ἰδέαν—“Such was the general nature of the disease” (Jowett); ‘taking a general view of the symptoms’.

standard or principle, without insistence upon mathematical exactitude. In other words, and without prejudice to the existence of considerable departures in the one or the other direction, this expression itself virtually reaffirms the influence of that disturbing factor already recognized by Thucydides, in his remark that the depth of the files was not uniform, but was settled for each battalion by its own commander,⁶ and by none other. As the eye ranged over the marshalled army as a whole (ἐπίπῳ), there was, he means, no mistaking the general tendency towards the adoption of the familiar Hellenic norm of a depth of eight shields; none the less was it equally clear that at this or that point, perhaps even at many points, some influence had been at work to prevent uniform adoption of that depth of file. The expression ἐπίπῳ, however, in itself has nothing whatever to say as to the actual numerical proportion of files of eight to files of higher or lower figure. This fact necessarily carries with it the implication that Thucydides can give no precise information about the effective total strength of the Lakedaemonians, beyond the bare fact, independently ascertained, that seven battalions, as he calls them, were brought into line. Two factors are involved, both of them entirely beyond his control. On the one hand, the deliberate policy of the Spartans, a policy operating no doubt in the field as well as at home, kept dark just this sort of information; on the other hand, we have to reckon with the discretionary power of the individual battalion commander in regulating the depth of his

⁶ Thuc. 5. 68: ἀλλ' ὡς λοχαγὸς ἕκαστος ἐβούλετο. On this, Thirlwall has the following remark (*Hist.* vol. 1, Appendix 2, p. 445): "... it would seem to be of the polemarchs that he is speaking, when he says that each lochagus had the power of varying the depth of his division at his pleasure. For this can scarcely have been left to the discretion of any inferior officer." But if Thucydides had made up his mind to apply the term λόχος (battalion) to the maximal divisions of the Lakedaemonian army, and by consequence the term λοχαγός (battalion commander) to its highest ranking officer, why did he complicate matters by bringing in the term Polemarch (brigadier) at all? We ourselves are of course bound throughout to render just what Thucydides actually does write; merely noting here the possibility that, in this passage, by λοχαγός he may have meant 'Leader of what I Thucydides here do call λόχος', not 'Leader of what the Spartans do call λόχος'. The probability, however, is that Thucydides was in a fog about the whole matter, and did not know exactly how the battalion commander stood to the brigadier.

files. The one fact requisite for our enlightenment, namely the number of men in the unit to which Thucydides has chosen, to his own confusion, to apply the term "battalion", is obstinately withheld—for the best of reasons. Yet that was the one figure that rendered his readers independent of those others over which Thucydides was at such pains to be exact. And conversely, it is a figure not deducible from his data; because the strength of the lower unit, the Enomotia, is equally withheld, for the same good reason—the historian's own ignorance.

Some explanation of this curious and illogical feature must be forthcoming, some explanation of the manifest contradiction between the historian's confessed ignorance and his submission of data leading directly to that definite figure which he avows to be beyond his power of discovery. Where, then, does that explanation lie? It lies solely in the assumption that this passage in which the Lakedaimonian army organization is sketched, containing the "computation" that shall enable any one to "see" the total of Lakedaimonian troops in line at Mantinea, did not stand in the original draft of the narrative. It is a later addition, incorporated, no doubt by Thucydides himself,⁷ a long time after the event to which it is supposed to refer, upon which it professes to throw much-needed light. Conscious, as he could not fail to be conscious, that his narrative at this point was not all that could be desired, he inserted at some later date, for good or ill, this summary of Lakedaimonian military organization, by way of supplement. Whether he has rightly understood the matter, or understanding it has expressed it with accuracy, is another question.

⁷ It is like a footnote in a modern book. My view of this passage, though not based upon, is illustrative of, the opinion expressed by Breitenbach, in the Appendix to his edition of Xenophon's *Hellenica* (p. 237 ff.; cp. his article: 'Ueber die Abfassungszeit des Thukydideischen Geschichtswerkes', in *Neue Jahrb. f. Phil. u. Paed.*, vol. 107, 1873, p. 185)—that Thucydides was continually revising and enlarging his History, down to the time of his premature death. He was constantly inserting documents and other matter of various kinds, and of various degrees of elaboration and formal completeness, in the main mass of his material. This of course implies that this latter lay before him in the shape of separate sheets. That, to compare small things with great, is precisely the form and the method in which and through which this present work has grown in the course of the years. See on this point the article by W. K. Prentice: 'How Thucydides wrote his History', in *Classical Philology*, vol. 25 (1930), pp. 117 ff.

A welcome result of the adoption of this view of the summary in question is the protection of the textual tradition in the opening sentence of the interpolated or supplementary Chapter. The expression "I could not have given an exact figure" is perfectly natural and correct, as applied at a subsequent date in reference to information not at command when the account was first penned. And the past tenses (*ἠγνοεῖτο . . . ἠπίστεῖτο*) are also strictly in order and appropriate to the historian's own previous ignorance and scepticism as at the date of his writing the main narrative; in the interval he had discovered a remedy, he flattered himself, for his ignorance—his scepticism was perhaps incurable—in a little Table of the Lakedaimonian army-system, the very Conspectus here embodied. An exact figure for the army as a whole, he assures us, he simply could not have given—at the time when he first wrote his account; later, he was in a position, he thought, to offer data that would enable any one to obtain an accurate and clear picture of the numbers of the Lakedaimonians themselves—those of the Lakedaimonian allies, we observe, being now quietly dropped. We may amuse ourselves with the fancy that for his Table or Conspectus Thucydides had to thank a companion in misfortune—one or other, or both, of the exiled Spartan brigadiers; certainly they must have been, it should appear, none too anxious to make things clear, but much more concerned that their serious and inquisitive Athenian acquaintance should view the king's generalship at a proper angle.

Thucydides, then, professes to put us in the way, after all, of what he calls "seeing" for ourselves⁸ the number of Lake-

⁸ The use of the word *σκοπεῖν* in this connexion is interesting. Thucydides is anxious that his readers shall form for themselves a clear mental picture of the scene. That is a distinguishing feature of his style. That behind this entire narrative of this Mantineian campaign there lies information derived, if not from a principal actor in the drama, at any rate from an eye-witness, is beyond question. For this conclusion, we are not dependent solely upon the indication given by the use of the word *ἐφάνη* at the beginning of Chapter 68—upon which alone apparently reliance is placed. I here point out a more subtle and interesting piece of evidence to the same effect. In describing the deployment of the Lakedaimonians, Thucydides uses phrases that imply movement (5. 66: *καθίσταντο ἐς κόσμον τὸν ἐαυτῶν*, and 5. 67: *καθίστασαν τοὺς λόχους καὶ παρ' αὐτοὺς Ἡραϊῆς*); whereas, in his description of the order of battle of the Confederates, who were there standing with their contingents drawn up in phalanx, no such

daimonians engaged—meaningless expression, unless it is intended to cover the full tale of Lakedaimonian troops, with the exception of such, if any, as find independent enumeration.

The only separate and independent enumeration in the passage is confined to the corps of Skirites, which is definitely given as six hundred strong. Hence, when Thucydides assures us that, apart from the Skirites, the battalions in action were seven in number, he must be understood to be reckoning, not merely the Lakedaimonians proper, but all other units that could lay claim to the title Lakedaimonian. The Veterans of Brasidas, along with the Neodamodes, cannot possibly fail of inclusion in the given total of seven Lakedaimonian battalions; taken together, these two bodies make up what Thucydides calls a λόχος, "battalion"—though that was not in fact its proper designation.⁹ The specific exclusion of the Skirites, and of the Skirites alone, not only in this passage, but also in that other passage wherein the exact number of men in the front rank of the seven battalions purports to be given, guarantees that all other "Lakedaimonian" elements are included in the aforesaid total of seven Lakedaimonian battalions in the field.

None the less is it true that by saying, as he does, in dynamic forms are employed, but only such as imply rest (5. 67: εἶχον . . . ἦσαν . . . παρ' αὐτοῖς). The eye-witness, influenced in his choice of language by the lively evolutions that brought order out of seeming confusion on the one side, as contrasted with the immobility of those others, here speaks through this difference—unless it is Thucydides the Artist, and perhaps more the Artist than he was himself aware of being, or even wished to be, that we have to thank for this nuance; which no doubt many will refuse to recognize.

⁹ Its proper designation was Μόρα (Brigade). The Mora embraced two linked battalions (λόχοι). Since he perversely chose to use the familiar Attic term Lochos in speaking of this highest multiple of the Enomotia, Thucydides entangled himself in his own terminology, and unwittingly dropped one grade in the Lakedaimonian military hierarchy of Enomotia (Platoon), Pentekostys (Company), Lochos (Battalion), and Mora (Brigade); with the result that the estimate to which his words have led his interpreters is just half the true figure for the Brigade, as fully manned upon a πανδημεῖ mobilization. Thucydides entirely forgot, if indeed he ever knew, that one complete Lochos in each Mora was provided by Perioikoi. Though the conclusion thus summarily here stated was reached by me many years previously, by a process apparently quite different from his, it agrees, I find, essentially with that of Mr. Arnold J. Toynbee, as set forth by him in his fine article, 'The Growth of Sparta', in *Journ. of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 33 (1913), pp. 246 ff.

Chapter 67, that next after the Veterans of Brasidas and the Neodamodes the Λακεδαιμόνιοι αὐτοί drew up their battalions, Thucydides definitely and purposely excludes those veterans and emancipated Helots from this rubric of Λακεδαιμόνιοι αὐτοί. Quite another thing is it to wish to go on to argue that those veterans and emancipated Helots are to be excluded also from the given total of seven battalions of Λακεδαιμόνιοι. For it is to be observed that not in this Chapter 67, nor in this connexion, does the figure seven for the battalions of Λακεδαιμόνιοι find mention at all, but in the next following, interpolated or later added, Chapter 68; which on the one hand sets out expressly to give a view (σκοπεῖν) of the total strength of the Lakedaimonians in the line of battle, and on the other hand contains absolutely no reference either to Veterans of Brasidas or to Neodamodes by name as such, while yet explicitly and by name excluding the Skirites from the reckoning. From this we must inevitably infer, not that the Veterans of Brasidas and the Neodamodes are to be held excluded because not specifically mentioned one way or the other, but that they are to be held included, just because they are not specifically barred out of a summary that, under the proviso of the omission of a single item—that of the Skirites—professes to be exhaustive. The burden of proof lies, not upon those who would include this Helot brigade in the specified total of seven λόχοι of Λακεδαιμόνιοι, but upon those who would exclude it from that total. These three groups, then, the Veterans of Brasidas, the Neodamodes, and the Skirites, are each and all alike plainly ruled out of the class here, in Chapter 67, dubbed Λακεδαιμόνιοι αὐτοί; but just as plainly do they all three alike fall within the class called Λακεδαιμόνιοι simply—to which class the Skirites at all events are expressly acknowledged by Thucydides himself¹⁰ to belong. The language of the historian is here accurate to the letter. Seven battalions is the total, not of Λακεδαιμόνιοι αὐτοί, but of Λακεδαιμόνιοι simply. We are warned, however, that the Skirites are not included in this total of seven battalions. The reason for this express exclusion of the Skirites, who else would naturally be reckoned in the class of

¹⁰ Thuc. 5. 67: αἱεὶ ταύτην τὴν τάξιν μόνοι Λακεδαιμονίων ἐπὶ σφῶν αὐτῶν ἔχοντες.

Λακεδαιμόνιοι, was twofold. It lay partly in the fact that these were the only troops—with the sole exception of the Royal Guard—for which Thucydides, here in all probability relying upon current opinion or common knowledge, could venture to put down a definite figure. All Greece knew by repute the strength of those famous Highlanders, and the strength of the Guard; but no one in Greece, other than the Spartan authorities, knew exactly the strength of the purely Lakedaimonian battalions in the field on any given occasion. Partly also, no doubt, it lay in the fact that the Skirites were never brigaded with other troops to form what Thucydides speaks of as a λόχος.

It may perhaps be urged that, by parity of reasoning, we should go on to argue that the three hundred men of the king's Guard must be included in the seven battalions, seeing that they are not specifically excluded therefrom. We must certainly concede that there is no proven necessity to deny that Thucydides may have been under the belief that the Guards were included in the battalion organization, or to deny that indeed they were as a matter of fact so included. Where the evidence is so scanty, and our principal authority so lamentably wanting in definiteness, we must be content to admit that our grand total for the Lakedaimonians may possibly be in error to that extent. Upon the whole, however, the balance of probability seems to incline towards the view that the corps of Guards will have stood outside the regular battalion organization, and it is so treated in our final estimate of the numbers.

Whatever the truth about the Guard, it is at all events really indisputable that the total of seven battalions must include the two battalions of Aristokles and Hipponoidas. Denial of this, surely, would make discussion of the figures of Thucydides mere waste of time. Setting out with a declared intention of enabling us to "see" the number of Lakedaimonians engaged,¹¹ how could he disregard, and as

¹¹ Probably the worst rendering in the world, of the word σκοπεῖν in this place, is that of Jowett—"give some idea of"; which simply avoids the issue, and is meant to save the face of Thucydides. For σκοπεῖν implies a definite picture; a very different matter from what is implied by having "some idea", a more or

it were carry to a suspense account, so large a proportion of the army, by reserving two entire battalions for later, merely incidental, reference? The only tolerable defence would be to argue that these two battalions were composed, not of Lakedaimonian, but of allied troops—a statement insusceptible of proof, and in itself improbable. Whether rightly or wrongly, Thucydides believed himself to be giving a complete and accurate conspectus of the Lakedaimonians present in the field. He may not have hit upon the best and clearest mode of expressing his meaning, but there can be no serious debate as to what he imagined himself to be doing. We must hold fast to the position that the two battalions commanded by Aristokles and Hipponoidas were battalions of purely Lakedaimonian infantry, and consequently are necessarily included in the total of seven Lakedaimonian battalions taking part in the action.

What was the state of the composite Helot brigade of Veterans of Brasidas and Neodamodes? The nucleus of the force taken by Brasidas to Thrace in 424 B.C.¹² was constituted by 700 Helot hoplites. We have no reason to think that their losses in Chalkidike or in the upper country were very severe. Some of these troops, no doubt, formed part of the force of 500 Peloponnesian hoplites detailed by Brasidas for the defence of Skione and Mende. These reinforcements, such of them as survived the fall of Mende, made good their escape to Skione, and contributed to the stout defence of that town throughout the winter and spring of 421/420 B.C. When Skione at last fell, the Athenians butchered all her adult men, and enslaved the women and

less hazy notion, of a thing. In his note on Thuc. 1. 22: ὅσοι δὲ βούλησονται τῶν τε γενομένων τὸ σαφὲς σκοπεῖν καὶ τῶν μελλόντων κτλ., Jowett justly and accurately explains the word: "to have present to their eyes the exact facts"; and in his Translation of the passage also renders it correctly: "who desires to have before his eyes a true picture of the events." But why not the same accuracy in our present passage?

¹² Thuc. 4. 80: προθύμως τῷ Βρασίδᾳ αὐτῶν (sc. τῶν Εἰλωτῶν) ξυνέπεμψαν ἑπτακοσίους ὀπλίτας, τοὺς δ' ἄλλους ἐκ τῆς Πελοποννήσου μισθῷ πείσας ἐξήγαγεν. He took with him in all 1,700 hoplites (4. 78). We see then, that he took a full half-brigade of Helots set free for line service—that is to say, one Lochos or battalion of 600 men; but his Lochos was one-sixth over strength, in order to provide a reserve for replacement of casualties.

children. That brutality was deliberately carried out in pursuance of a decree passed by the Athenian Assembly two years previously. As for the Peloponnesians found in the town, it was lucky for them that in the interval there had come about the Peace of Nikias. This, while specifically recognizing the right of the Athenians of dealing at discretion with the native inhabitants of Skione and certain other places, obliged them to give up all the Peloponnesians besieged in Skione,¹³ with such other allies of the Lakedaimonians as might be found within the walls, together with all whom Brasidas had thrown into that town. It seems that all who came within the above categories withdrew from the doomed town at once, and were brought home by Klearidas, whom Brasidas had appointed governor of Amphipolis. How many of the 700 Helot hoplites who had gone out with Brasidas to Thrace survived to return to Lakonia with Klearidas? Five hundred seems a not excessive estimate. These 500 seasoned Helots, emancipated for their good service, were established not long afterwards as a standing garrison in Lepreon.¹⁴ Subsequently, a fine levied upon the Lakedaimonians in respect of this garrison, or reinforcement of it, amounted to 2,000 minae, being at the rate of two minae for each hoplite.¹⁵ The Lepreon garrison, it should seem, was officially reckoned as being 1,000 strong. Five hundred rank and file, more or fewer, were emancipated Helots who had served in Thrace under Brasidas; the balance will have been ordinary Neodamodes, that is to say Helots similarly emancipated for life

¹³ Thuc. 5. 18: καὶ τοὺς ἐν Σκιῶνῃ πολιορκουμένους Πελοποννησίων ἀφεῖναι καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ὅσοι Λακεδαιμονίων ξύμμαχοι ἐν Σκιῶνῃ εἰσὶ καὶ ὅσους Βρασίδης ἐπέπεμψε.

¹⁴ Thuc. 5. 34: οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι ἐψηφίσαντο τοὺς μὲν μετὰ Βρασίδου Εἰλωτας μαχεσαμένους ἐλευθέρους εἶναι καὶ οἰκεῖν ὅπου ἂν βούλωνται, καὶ ὕστερον οὐ πολλῶ αὐτοὺς μετὰ τῶν νεοδαμωδῶν ἐς Λέπρεον κατέστησαν.

¹⁵ Thuc. 5. 49. The statement, and the circumstances, are not very clear. From Thuc. 5. 31 it should appear that the original garrison of Lepreon was sent to that place before the fall of Skione (Thuc. 5. 32). If that was so, the reference in 5. 49 must be to a reinforcement of that garrison; which reinforcement may, or may not, have been composed of Veterans of Brasidas, who are spoken of in 5. 34 as having been sent to Lepreon (see previous note). Or it may be that the remark in Thuc. 5. 31 is anticipative, and really refers to the first permanent occupation of Lepreon when the Veterans of Brasidas became available for that service.

service in the line, indistinguishable except in point of military experience from the veterans originally bearing the honorific title which recorded that experience. It looks as though the Lakedaimonians kept permanently in garrison at Lepreon one full Helot brigade (Mora). On paper, this garrison stood at 1,000 men; but its real effective strength was the secret of the Spartan authorities, and of the brigade itself.¹⁶ When Agis drew to himself troops from this reserve for his campaign against the Confederates, he can hardly, in face of the declared hostility of Elis, have ventured to denude Lepreon entirely; a draft of the one of its two linked battalions (Lochoi) would perhaps be the most that he summoned. The draft possibly included all the veterans still on the active list; but the name "Brasideioi", of course, was a corps title, which did not necessarily imply that all who bore it had ever even seen Brasidas. This linked battalion having effected a junction with the main body of the army, at Orestheion, or at Tegea, received a complement of a similar number of Neodamodes mobilized in Lakonia to bring the Helot corps to the full war strength of a brigade.

Of the three contingents remaining for our estimation, on the Lakedaimonian side—those of the Heraians, the Mainalians, and the Tegeans—it is hard to speak with any degree of confidence.

At Plataiai, the Tegeans had numbered, according to Herodotos, 1,500 men. At Thermopylai, Tegea and Mantinea had each been represented by only 500 hoplites.¹⁷ Neither figure reflects the true military strength of the two

¹⁶ If the Helot garrison in Lepreon was a brigade (Mora) of full strength, it numbered 1,280 men. But if the popular estimate of the effective strength of the highest division of the Lakedaimonian army was, in round numbers, 1,000 men—why, the Spartans were not likely to cavil at that, or to go out of their way to correct it. Partly, this ignorance was due to a confusion in terminology (to which Thucydides himself fell victim); partly also it was due to the fact that no outsiders ever knew how many year-classes were called up by the Ephors on any given occasion, and consequently never knew the exact field strength of an Enomotia.

¹⁷ At Thermopylai, Τεγεαίων καὶ Μαντινέων χίλιοι, ἡμίσεες ἑκατέρων (Herod. 7. 202). At Plataiai, 1,500 hoplites from Tegea; 600 from Orchomenos (Herod. 9. 28). The contingents of Mantinea and Elis, the strength of which is not stated, arrived at Plataiai too late for the battle (Herod. 9. 77).

towns. We are justified in assuming that for this campaign of 418 B.C., in which both of them were so vitally interested, the full field strength of both Mantinea and Tegea must have been called out; and further, that the effective militia of the two cities was still approximately on an equality as regards numbers. Taking one thing with another, if we reckon the Tegean contingent at Mantinea at 2,500 men we shall perhaps not be very wide of the mark—almost certainly we shall not err in the direction of excess. The strength of the Heraians and the Mainalians is more purely guess-work. We should hardly care to assume a higher figure than say 1,200 men for the combined strength of these two contingents. From Heraia, at any rate, cannot have come any very high proportion of her available militia.

We thus obtain the following state of the Lakedaimonian army at Mantinea:

Skirites (nominal Lochos or half-brigade)	. . . . .	640
Brasideioi + Neodamodes (full brigade)	. . . . .	1,280
Six Lakedaimonian brigades (of 35 year-classes)	. . . . .	6,720
Royal Guard (half-Lochos)	. . . . .	320
Heraians and Mainalians (1 brigade)	. . . . .	1,200
Tegeans (2 brigades)	. . . . .	2,500
		<hr/>
		12,660 hoplites
		<hr/>
Cavalry (Spartan)	. . . . .	400

On the side of the Confederates, we have two items definitely stated. These are the Athenian contingent of 1,000 infantry and 300 cavalry, and the Argeian select corps of 1,000 men. But the figure given for the select corps is merely nominal; the corps was in fact a full brigade, which on this occasion took the field in full strength—at least 1,200 men. The Argeian civic militia, the so-called Five Battalions, on the other hand, were mobilized no doubt at two-thirds strength—say 4,200 men, all told. The contingents drawn from the Argeian dependencies of Orneai and Kleonai may have numbered perhaps 400 men. The Mantineians, as already remarked, must have put their full fighting force into line—not fewer than 2,500 hoplites. Their allies from the rest of Arkadia could hardly be estimated safely at more than

perhaps 800 men. To these are to be added the windfall of the contingent of Orchomenos, say 800 men, upon a two-thirds mobilization.¹⁸

We thus reach the following state of the Confederate army:

Mantineians	.	.	.	.	.	.	2,500
Mantineian Allies	.	.	.	.	.	.	800
Argeian Crack Corps	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,200
Argeian Five Battalions	.	.	.	.	.	.	4,200
Argeian Allies	.	.	.	.	.	.	400
Orchomenos	.	.	.	.	.	.	800
Athenians	.	.	.	.	.	.	1,000
							<hr/> 10,900 hoplites <hr/>
Cavalry (Athenian)	.	.	.	.	.	.	300

The comparative strength of the two armies, then, was as 12,660 to 10,900 men; a difference in favour of Agis of 1,760 men. Assuming, purely for purpose of comparison, a uniform depth of eight shields in the file, the fronts occupied respectively, say 1,580 and 1,360 yards. The difference, of 220 yards (= frontage constituted by 1,760 hoplites, eight deep), is sufficient to have justified the observation, obviously that of an eye-witness, that the Lakedaimonians manifestly had the advantage in numbers (*μείζον ἐφάρνη*), that is to say, in extent of frontal development. The addition to the Confederates of the 3,000 Eleian hoplites (= 375 men frontage) would have redressed the balance, with 155 files, i.e. 1,240 men, to spare. But this difference again would have been more than compensated by the addition to the army of Agis of the reserves brought up by his colleague. Presumably, Agis could do these sums just as well as we can.

¹⁸ To Thermopylai Orchomenos sent only 120 men—a scurvy contribution; why, even poor Mykenai sent two-thirds of that figure (Herod. 7. 202). One thousand men came ἐκ τῆς λοιπῆς Ἀρκαδίας, i.e. Arkadia exclusive of the three principal states of Orchomenos, Tegea, and Mantinea. If Phleious could, and did, send 200 hoplites to Thermopylai (Herod. 7. 202), and 1,000 to Plataiai (Herod. 9. 28), Orchomenos should certainly have been able to put at least one full brigade in the field, and to keep it there at full strength, without any undue strain. The 120 hoplites sent from Orchomenos to Thermopylai represented ten per centum of her fighting force—possibly hardly so much; to Plataiai she sent a half-brigade,

EXCURSUS C

THE TIME COVERED BY THE OPERATIONS

οὐδὲν ἀφετέον ἄργον· ἀποδεικτικῇ δὲ μᾶλλον τῇ διηγήσει
χρηστέον, ἵνα μηδὲν ἄπορον ἀπολείπωμεν τῶν ζητουμέ-
νων τοῖς φιληκόοις.

POLYBIOS, 4. 40.

WHEN in a cool hour we question Thucydides about the chronology of the Mantineian operations, we find ourselves fobbed off with a number of vague phrases: “after this”, “in the meantime”, “not long after”, “immediately”—the gamut of conventionalities familiar in Greek historiography.¹ In regard to two, and only two, items of the entire series of operations is the time reference exact and definite. The return march of the Lakedaimonians from the stream is stated to have been carried out on “the day following” their hasty withdrawal from Mantineian territory; and the raid of the Epidaurians into Argeian territory fell, we are told, “the day before” the battle of Mantinea. It is surely in the highest degree surprising that the Epidaurian raid, which hardly belonged to the main current of operations, as presented by Thucydides, should have been selected by him for this distinction of precise chronological definition. Why

¹ The relevant time-signals are as follows:

Chap. 61: μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο, Athenians come to Argos.

εὐθύς, march against Orchomenos.

ὕστερον, Argeians come to Orchomenos.

62: μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο, consultation of Confederates.

64: ἐν τούτῳ, news from Tegea reaches Sparta.

οὐ πολλῶ ὕστερον, Arkadian allies join Agis.

65: ὥς εἶλον, Confederates occupy Alesion.

εὐθύς, Lakedaimonians move against them.

τὴν ἡμέραν ταύτην, Agis at the water.

ὕστερον, Confederates descend from Alesion.

66: τῇ ὕστεραια, Confederates get into line.

εὐθύς, deployment of the Lakedaimonians.

75: τῆς μάχης μελλούσης ἔσεσθαι, arrival of Pleistoanax.

τῇ προτεραιᾷ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς μάχης, Epidaurian inroad.

ὕστερον τῆς μάχης, Confederates reinforced.

εὐθύς, Confederates move against Epidauros.

εὐθύς, Athenians finish their fortification.

not other items, more pertinent to the understanding of the whole? Can it be seriously held that it may have been really impossible for Thucydides, despite his "most careful and particular inquiry",² to find out exactly how many days, for example, had been spent by the Confederates in the reduction of Orchomenos, or, more important and of a surety no secret, how many days the Lakedaimonians were in occupation of their camp at the Herakleion, before they retired southwards in apparent confession of defeat?

As it stands, the narrative is like a map without a scale, or rather, perhaps, one the scale of which is not uniform. The impression created by it is that the entire series of events, reckoning inclusively from the outmarch of Agis from Tegea to his victorious final return to that town, fell within the compass of two consecutive days, and no more. For anything that Thucydides has to the contrary, the Confederates occupied Alesion the moment they discovered the Lakedaimonians at the Herakleion, nor is there anything to show that this was not, as indeed it most likely was, on the very day the invaders reached it; then, with as little delay on their side, the latter set about the attack. Next, in immediate breathless sequence, came the retirement of the Lakedaimonians that same day in the direction of Tegea, to spend the remaining hours of daylight at work on the stream. Whilst the Lakedaimonians were amusing themselves at the stream, the Confederates, after some hesitation, came down from Alesion to take up a new position in the plain, where they encamped for the night. This whole sequence of events fell, it should seem, within the limits of that first day of invasion with which the campaign opened. Next day, how early Thucydides does not say, the Lakedaimonians for the third time traversed the familiar route leading through the Mytika narrows into the territory of Mantinea. Then ensued the battle, represented as an unexpected interruption of the invaders' progress to their previous camping-ground. Thereupon, still on the same day, for anything that we are

² Thuc. 1. 22: τὰ δ' ἔργα τῶν πραχθέντων ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ παρατυχόντος πυνθανόμενος ἡξίωσα γράφειν, οὐδ' ὥς ἐμοὶ ἐδόκει, ἀλλ' οἷς τε αὐτὸς παρῆν, καὶ παρὰ τῶν ἄλλων ὅσον δυνατὸν ἀκριβεῖα περὶ ἐκάστου ἐπεξελθών.

told to the contrary, the army of Agis, having collected its dead, finally withdrew to Tegea; this whole tale of marching, countermarching, and fighting thus being compressed within the compass of some thirty-six, or at most forty-eight hours, daylight and darkness—*credat Iudaeus*.

If the action of the drama really went forward at this brisk pace, how account for the precision with which Thucydides has been at pains to correlate the Epidaurian raid, chronologically, with Lakedaimonian operations in Arkadia? That inroad was made "the day before" the battle—in other words, according to the apparent Thucydidean scheme of chronology, it fell on the very day that Agis opened his own campaign by his inroad into Mantineian territory. We may suspect that there was here at work something more than mere coincidence. The point of immediate concern, however, is that this mode of dating would naturally lead us to suppose that some latitude of choice had been open to the Epidaurians in regard to the date of their raid. The natural and reasonable supposition is that the Epidaurians, of set purpose, had deferred their raid until the hands of the Argeians should be tied by the actual appearance of Agis in the field, and his beginning serious operations. They must have realized, one thinks, that up to that moment the Argeians might feel themselves just as free as the Eleians to come and go, especially when it was a question of the defence of their homeland against hostile incursion. Thucydides, therefore, is doubtless quite correct in dating the inroad as he does, to the day before the battle; but, upon his own chronology, what choice had he in the matter? Or what choice, according to his account, had the Epidaurians themselves? What call is there for this sudden solicitude for his readers' clearness of conception in a case where no error was really possible? On his own showing, there was actually no day available as a reasonable alternative date for the Epidaurian raid, except the very day on which the battle itself was fought and the whole business brought to an end. Thucydides has but two days between which to choose—the day before the battle, i.e. the day on which the campaign opened, and the day of the battle itself, i.e. the day on which the campaign closed;

and the second of these trod on the heels of the first. Does not his fortunate precision just at this point betray the fact that some, perhaps not inconsiderable, stretch of time has dropped out of sight on the far side of, i.e. anterior to, the central epoch from which he makes his reckoning, namely the day of the battle—that in fact not one day only, but several days, elapsed between the Lakedaimonians' outmarch from Tegea, and their victory in front of Mantinea? If that was so, then naturally, once the Argeians' hands were tied by the actual appearance of the Lakedaimonians in the field, the Epidaurians were at liberty to choose what day they would for their own raid; and, as it happened, did pick on the day before the battle.

If the above were the only place betraying compression of the chronology, it might be hard to carry the point. Fortunately, Thucydides unconsciously reveals the inadequacy of his time-table in another passage also, one that speaks still more plainly. We read that king Pleistoanax brought up reinforcements for Agis from Sparta as far as Tegea, "when the battle was now imminent." What are we to make of this large vagueness of dating, in view of the fact that Sparta and Tegea lie nearly thirty miles apart, a long day's forced march? The narrative, as it stands, simply allows no margin of time at all, even for the dispatch of a messenger from Agis to Sparta, let alone for the march of Pleistoanax to Tegea in response—unless we relegate both events to the time spent by Agis at Tegea whilst he was awaiting his Arkadian allies. The time interval so spent was confessedly not very long; and we are faced with the difficulty that to make drafts upon it in this connexion brings up at once the problem of explaining why king Agis should have ventured after all so hastily upon his own forward movement. If, on the very threshold of the campaign, and before he had set foot on enemy territory, he felt so dire need of reinforcement, why should he have been so eager to court an issue upon the battle-field without waiting for the northern allies whom he had summoned, or for the home reserves for which he had appealed? Unless indeed in regard to the latter we are to adopt an hypothesis that their dispatch was due simply to

nervousness on the part of the Spartan government itself, and not to any representations of the king in the field.³ The more the dispatch of the messenger is antedated with the object of bringing it within the limits of the time spent at Tegea, before the opening of the campaign, the more certainly at a loss do we find ourselves to account for that premature initiative of the king—not to speak of the difficulty of understanding for what purpose Pleistoanax can have made his appearance at Tegea at all. Thucydides himself, it is to be remarked, has nothing whatever to tell us on that point; he simply chronicles the incident, without explaining why, as things stood, Agis should have wanted reinforcements, or why the Spartan government should have imagined that it was desirable for him to have them. So far as Thucydides is concerned, the episode merely hangs in the air, discrete, incoherent—precisely as we should expect of an item reported by one quite in the dark as to the real issues and motive forces. Yet, in regard to the purposes of Agis himself in withdrawing from Mantineian territory, the historian professes to be able to go a great deal farther than this in the way of explanation.⁴

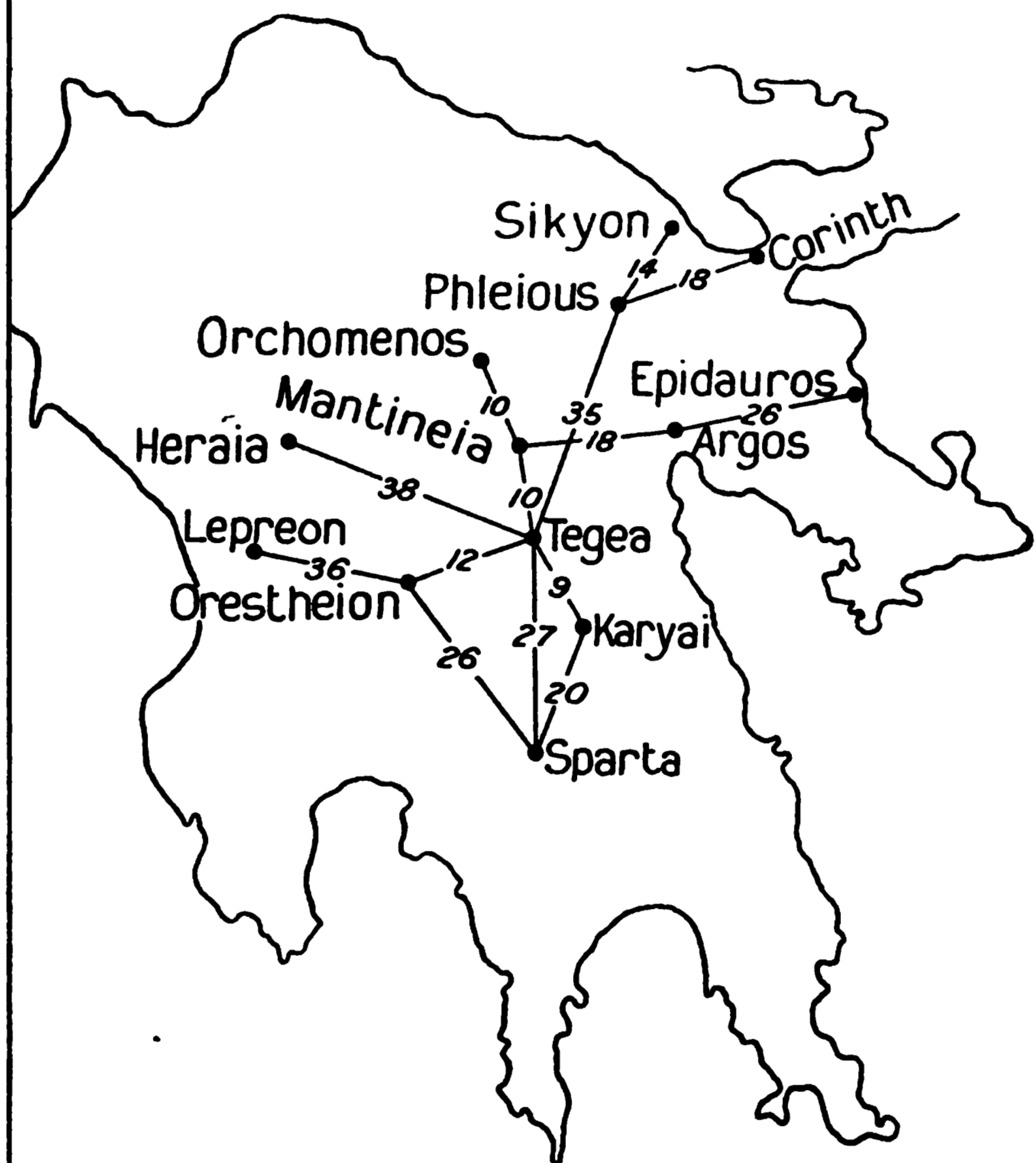
The above considerations drive us inexorably to the inference that here again several days of comparative inactivity preceding the great and striking event of battle have suffered obliteration and simply dropped out of the account.

Evidently, then, the cardinal items in the chronology of the campaign are, firstly, the length of time that Agis lay at Tegea waiting for his allies; secondly, the length of time that he lay in camp at the Herakleion before making the feint attack preliminary to his first withdrawal from Mantineian territory.

³ This foolish hypothesis is adopted by Henderson (*Great War*, p. 321): "So grave was the anxiety at home that presently Pleistoanax also marched north with his remaining sixth. Though law had for a century forbidden both Spartan kings to be present at one and the same time with the army, yet Pleistoanax must march to see what befell in this the most critical of campaigns. He had actually reached Tegea before he heard of the battle fought and the victory won a few miles away."

⁴ Of course this is just the story-teller's omniscience taken over into 'history'. It goes back to Homer's εἰπε πρὸς δὲ μεγάλητορα θυμόν. Herodotos is full of this element of τὸ μυστικόν, which Thucydides flatters himself is absent from his own work.

Diagram showing the
geographical relationship of
the places in the **PELOPONNESE**
to which reference is made,
with approximate distances in miles



In regard to the first of these items, the king was not quite in a position himself to dictate the answer. His strategic idea must necessarily take account of factors not directly or wholly within his personal control. The chief of these related to the concentration of his own army for the offensive. If the full Arkadian levy was absolutely indispensable to his plans, there was no help for it—he must just wait with what patience he could command until all the Arkadians joined him. Under this head of Arkadian allies are included the militia of Tegea (2,500 men), the Heraians and Mainalians (1,200 men), say with train nearly 4,000 men, all told. Of these, the Tegeans were already on the spot; but the others had a long way to come, and besides could not be assembled all in a moment. It is clear that for this second section of his allies Agis will have had to make an allowance of some days at least, during which he himself must stay inactive at Orestheion, or at Tegea. For the third and more distant section, that comprising the contingents from Corinth and from central Greece, a much more extended delay would be imperative. What length of time he could allow for the primary concentration of these northern contingents, and for their march towards him, would depend upon the development of the general strategic situation. That Agis should find himself suddenly deprived of the “proud privilege of the initiative”, suddenly forced to conform to the enemy’s movements, was quite on the cards; for, in comparison, the Confederates were more free to act, by reason of the relatively greater concentration of their forces, despite the absence of the Eleians. Against this, of course, was to be set the composite character of their army, and its lack of unity of command, as tending heavily to discount its aptitude for initiative,⁵ let alone the antecedent probability that the Confederates would from the first adopt a purely defensive attitude.

It is perhaps not impossible for us to make some reasonable estimate of the minimum length of time that Agis at the outset must have been prepared to allow for the mobilization and march of his allies. That he must, at the start, have been

⁵ Cp. Thuc. I. 141: όταν . . . πάντες τε ισόψηφοι ὄντες καὶ οὐχ ὁμόφυλοι τὸ ἐφ’ ἑαυτὸν ἕκαστος σπεύδει· ἐξ ὧν φιλεῖ μηδὲν ἐπιτελεῖς γενέσθαι.

prepared to defer his own initiative for at least as long as was reasonably necessary to permit his allies to assemble, is quite beyond question. Indisputably, the orders sent out to Corinth and the northern states must have been taken at the time to imply, and must also be taken by us to imply, that the concentration of their contingents in Mantineian territory would be an effective factor in the military problem—that is to say, that in the original intention of the Spartan king, as it was at the time of sending out those orders, the battle was not to be fought in the absence of those contingents. So much at the least must be conceded, given that the campaign is to be conceived as having been conducted upon a rational basis—that the ancient Greek campaigns in general were not just so many haphazard excursions, carried out in a quite inconsequential and happy-go-lucky style that renders their discussion futile. We may assume, then, that a messenger, or more than one, had been dispatched northwards probably the same hour that the Spartans resolved upon intervention by arms—certainly before the king had any very precise information upon which to proceed. Perhaps it was only at Tegea, though possibly even at Orestheion, that his plans could take definite shape, in the light of the more detailed information probably by that time available concerning the movements and apparent designs of the Confederates. In the light of that information, Agis saw that he would do well to go to work at once, without waiting for his northern allies; but at the outset, upon the data there and then before him, it had appeared both desirable and practicable to secure their co-operation.

The question, therefore, is as to the earliest moment at which Agis could reasonably expect to see these northern contingents at his disposal. Expresses from Sparta will have been able to reach Corinth and Sikyon by midday of the second day out; thence crossing the Gulf, to Kreusis, to Antikyra, they will have reached the Phokians, Boiotians, and Lokrians, by the close of the third day out from Sparta. By the close of the fourth day, even sooner at best, the requisition of the Spartan Ephors will have been in the hands of the authorities in the principal towns. Within what time

thereafter the various quotas could be mobilized, and be ready to take the field, is matter of pure guess, since we know absolutely nothing of their machinery of mobilization. It will certainly not have worked with the speed and precision of that of the Lakedaimonians; moreover, it will have run none the more smoothly for the fact that already once within this same year the pick of the militia of these states had seen some weeks' service in the Peloponnese. Two, perhaps three, days are the least that can be assumed for the selection and organization of the quotas. Then again, these could not be allowed to dribble through to Agis piecemeal; they must cross the intervening enemy territory in strength sufficient to overawe or defy possible opposition. Hence we must go on to assume that the contingents would gather to certain primary points of concentration—to Corinth, to Sikyon, and finally to Phleious, the starting-point of the last stage of their southward march. All considerations duly weighed, it would appear reasonable to conclude that Agis can hardly have expected the northern contingents to reach the front before the tenth or the eleventh day, reckoning inclusively from the departure of the expresses from Sparta. We should in all probability hardly err in excess, were we to say that the earliest day on which these contingents could be in line was the twelfth, or perhaps even the thirteenth, day—reckoning inclusively from the date of the departure of the messengers from Sparta.

Exactly how long it was before the Arkadian allies were all concentrated at Tegea, Thucydides unfortunately does not say. From what point is his "not long afterwards" reckoned? Is the starting-point the king's departure from Sparta, or is it his arrival at Tegea? It is obvious that, for all we know, days not a few may have been spent at the half-way station, Orestheion. Perhaps within the two or three days following the king's arrival at Tegea the bulk of them may have mustered there. So far as these alone were concerned, therefore, Agis was probably in sufficient strength for a forward move by the evening of the fifth day at soonest, or by that of the sixth day at latest, reckoning inclusively from the date of his own departure from Sparta.

Such would seem to be the reasonable conclusions from the scanty evidence. Ultimately, as already explained, the king saw that he must eliminate his northern allies wholly from the account, and carry on without their active co-operation; time was of the essence of the problem, in the new aspect in which it was presented to him in consequence of the withdrawal of the Eleians.

Before dawn, on the seventh day, let us say, Agis crossed the frontier, and seized the Herakleion as an advanced post in order to put in operation the customary methods of inducing an enemy to leave the shelter of his walls to fight. It was unfortunate for the success of these methods, on the present occasion, that, as already pointed out, very little material damage could be inflicted by the Lakedaimonian marauders in the Mantineian plain. The days of respite during which Agis had lain at Tegea had enabled the Mantineians to put the finishing touches to their counter preparations.

A first day and night (the seventh out from Sparta), and a second day and night (the eighth), must be allowed as the minimum time of occupation of the Herakleion. Nor would it be unreasonable to extend this by a third day and night (the ninth), or even by an additional twenty-four hours (the tenth day). Long before the expiration of that time, of course, Agis will have realized that the Confederates had no intention of abandoning their policy of expectant inaction, and that for him to persist in maintaining his advanced position at the Herakleion was, in the circumstances, both useless and highly dangerous. In the forenoon of the eleventh day, therefore, we may suppose, Agis executed the feint, covering withdrawal of his train southwards. By evening of that day the Lakedaimonian army was once more concentrated in bivouac close to Tegea. Here the king perfected his dispositions for the renewed advance which he designed for the morrow—if in the meantime reports of the enemy's movements were such as he desired, and confidently expected as the result of his ruse. Perhaps also he looked to have been reinforced here by Pleistoanax, whose reserves were meant to countervail the possible addition of the Eleians to the enemy's

strength.⁶ It was now well within the range of probability that in the interval the Eleians might effect a junction with the Confederates. Their reappearance was by this time a matter of but few hours at most; the sequel proves that, like Pleistoanax, they were at this very moment pushing forward to the theatre of operations.

On the morning of the twelfth day, then, the earlier the better, the Lakedaimonians were once again in motion towards Mantinea. Pleistoanax indeed had not yet arrived with the expected reinforcements—but neither had the Eleians as yet reinforced the other side. So much, at the least, of reliable information may we conjecture to have been secured to Agis by his dispositions and resources under that head; and further, that the Confederates had moved down to a position in the plain, apparently eager to accept battle on their own territory. When the army of Agis went into bivouac again that night at Tegea—if indeed it did not rather bivouac on the battle-field itself—there stood to its credit an honest day's work of marching and fighting. Next morning, the thirteenth day, the slain must be buried. Probably we should allow the victors an additional day or two at Tegea, for the purpose of observing the Confederates; who now at last, but too late, were reinforced from Elis and from Athens. When the army of the Confederates withdrew

⁶ What was the strength of the force brought up to Tegea by Pleistoanax? The full strength of all the Enomotiai had been mobilized originally—that is to say, the forty year-classes ἀφ' ἡβης, together with the two year-classes of the μελλείρενες. Of these, one-sixth had been remitted to Sparta from Orestheion for home defence (Thuc. 5. 64: τὸ ἕκτον μέρος σφῶν αὐτῶν, ἐν ᾧ τὸ πρεσβύτερόν τε καὶ τὸ νεώτερον ἦν)—by which we are to understand, no doubt, the five oldest and the two youngest year-classes; seven men from each Enomotia. The six brigades of Spartiates and Perioikoi alone, I imagine, contributed to this reserve; the Helot brigade being retained in full strength. The reserve remitted to Sparta, therefore, totalled 1,344 men ($7 \times 4 \times 4 \times 2 \times 6 = 1,344$); and that was the minimum number brought up by Pleistoanax. Possibly we should add to this, as suggested in the Chronological Table, the sister battalion of Helots in garrison at Lepreon, which may have been directed to effect a junction with Pleistoanax at Tegea; that would be an addition of 640 hoplites. There would also, no doubt, be some balance of Perioikoi and Neodamodes and others, available in Lakonia; so that we may imagine that the Ephors scraped together at least two brigades (2,500 men) for this field force. I should, however, hesitate to believe that thereby Sparta sent out her very last man capable of bearing arms at a pinch, whether Spartiate, Perioikos, or Helot.

sullenly north-eastwards, bound for Argolis, Agis also was free to return to Sparta.

If the messenger dispatched to countermand the advance of the northern allies started late in the evening of the day of battle, he must have reached Phleious, or perhaps Corinth, very early on the following morning. Probably he found the contingents by this time fully concentrated and on the point of marching. As for king Pleistoanax, he appears to have reached Tegea only a few hours after Agis had again marched northwards, this time to fight. The situation as it then was, entirely favourable to Sparta, and calling for no increment of his forces, will have been made clear to his colleague by Agis, by means of a message left for Pleistoanax at Tegea. As soon as news of the victory came through to Tegea later in the day, Pleistoanax set his refreshed infantry in motion, probably for Karyai, about nine miles distant: here he would bivouac for the night, and so next day to Sparta (twenty miles). He would not care to leave the city denuded of troops an hour longer than was absolutely necessary. This advance of Pleistoanax with the reserve to the support of king Agis, while unintelligible except as evidence of change of plan on the part of the latter, is also sure proof that the estimate Agis had formed of the strategic situation, and the measures he had devised for coping with it, were endorsed by his home authorities. Pregnant as was the crisis with possibilities of gravest import for Spartan prestige and power, Agis was implicitly trusted as the man to handle it, and all the resources of the state were placed without hesitation at his unhampered disposal.

For Sparta enjoyed this supreme advantage—that she knew her own mind. Her foreign policy was at any rate not the sport of the vagaries of a rapidly and constantly shifting majority in a popular Assembly swayed by this or that pinchbeck politician, this or that emotional appeal or sectional interest, and thus ever in danger of doing either too much or too little. In this respect Sparta exhibited a solidarity that enabled her heavily to discount the multifarious designs and inconsequent activities of her more brilliant rival. Not least conspicuously on this occasion was this

telling advantage demonstrated. For the rest, the victory was one in which every Lakedaimonian had his share. Every element of the state—kings, ephors, and simple hoplite—each and all, could look back with the liveliest satisfaction and most legitimate pride upon the manner in which the dangers of this critical month had been faced and overcome. With two notorious exceptions, every man in his due measure had helped to save his country from a peril the deadliest that had threatened her within a half-century past.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Solely with the object of giving clearness and precision to our ideas, the following Table of Dates is appended.

August 20: (early morning) News from Tegea received at Sparta. Resolution taken to intervene. Mobilization orders sent out (before midday) to the Perioikoi, and to Northern Greece. Marching orders sent to Lepreon, to Heraia, to Skiritis.

August 21: Before noon of this day the messengers for the North reach Sikyon and Corinth; and later cross the Gulf to various points on the opposite coast. By noon of this day the runners dispatched to Lepreon and to Heraia will have reached their destinations.

August 22: The messengers for the North reach their respective destinations, by nightfall at latest. The Lochos of the Lepreon garrison, and the Heraian contingent, marching towards their points of concentration by their respective routes.

August 23: Agis marches from Sparta very early this day, and arrives at Orestheion before nightfall. The Skirites to Orestheion. The Lochos from Lepreon reaches Orestheion. Day 1.

August 24: Agis at Orestheion. After noon of this day, the draft of one-sixth from the Lakedaimonian brigades falls back to Belmina, and bivouacs there this night. Day 2.

August 25: In the course of this day the reserve arrives back at Sparta. Agis to Tegea. The contingent from Heraia reaches Tegea. Day 3.

August 26: Agis at Tegea. Arkadian contingents coming in. Day 4.

August 27: Agis at Tegea. Day 5.

August 28: The army of Agis fully concentrated this day. Two hours after midnight of August 28/29 Agis sets his forces in motion for the Herakleion. Day 6.

August 29: Agis at the Herakleion by sunrise. Later, the Confederates move out from Mantinea to Alesion. Day 7.

August 30: Agis in camp at the Herakleion. The Confederates on Alesion. Towards evening of this day, Agis dispatches a runner to Sparta, explaining the situation in detail, and asking for reinforcement in view of the attitude of the Confederates and the possibility of the reappearance of the Eleians. A runner perhaps also sent off to Lepreon, with orders for the reserve Lochos in garrison there to march upon Tegea. Day 8.

August 31: Agis still at the Herakleion. His request for reinforcement received in Sparta early in the morning of this day. The Confederates still motionless on the shoulder of Alesion. Day 9.

September 1: Agis still at the Herakleion. The Confederates still on Alesion, observing Agis. Day 10.

September 2: Agis in the course of this morning makes a demonstration against Alesion, to cover withdrawal of his train, and for other purposes. He falls back upon Tegea, in order to be in touch with his expected reinforcements next day, in the event of their being required. This night the Lakedaimonians are in bivouac just outside Tegea. The Confederates, in response to the movement of Agis, evacuate Alesion in the course of this afternoon, and go into bivouac this night on the plain, covering Mantinea. King Pleistanax, having on the morning of this day marched from Sparta with the reserves, is in bivouac this night at Karyai. On this day the Epidaurians invade Argolis. Day 11.

September 3: Early this morning, Agis, aware that the Confederates' reinforcements are still at least two marches distant from their objective, and also that Alesion has been evacuated, marches northwards again, for battle. Pleistanax reaches Tegea during the forenoon of this day, probably

just about the time that Agis is engaged. Late in the afternoon, having received news of the victory, Pleistoanax falls back to Karyai. Agis falls back upon Tegea. Day 12.

September 4: Agis at Tegea, observing the Confederates. Pleistoanax reaches Sparta in the evening of this day. In the course of this day the Confederates receive Athenian and Eleian reinforcements. Day 13.

September 5: Agis still at Tegea. The Confederates withdraw eastwards, against Epidaurus. Day 14.

September 6: Agis to Sparta. Day 15.

**PRINTED IN
GREAT BRITAIN
AT THE
UNIVERSITY PRESS
OXFORD
BY
JOHN JOHNSON
PRINTER
TO THE
UNIVERSITY**